

**The London School of Economics and Political Science**

# EUROPE FROM THE FAR RIGHT

EUROPE IN THE IDEOLOGY OF THE FRONT NATIONAL AND MOVIMENTO  
SOCIALE ITALIANO/ALLEANZA NAZIONALE (1978-2017)

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## **Abstract**

Born as a small economic union, the European Union has become a large supranational political organisation. Far right parties have been vocal critics of this process, leading some to consider opposition to European integration as one of their defining ideological features. Closer inspection of their position, however, reveals that their views are more complex than the label 'Euroscepticism' captures. What, then, is the relationship between the far right and 'Europe'? What do they mean by it and how has it become a part of their ideology?

To address these questions, this thesis carries out an in-depth interpretive analysis of party documents produced between 1978 and 2017 by the Movimento Sociale Italiano/Alleanza Nazionale in Italy and the Front National in France. Employing morphological analysis, it studies how these parties integrated Europe into their ideology, and how they defined their positions on the European Union.

The thesis' core contention is that the MSI/AN and FN repurposed key elements of their ideology to integrate Europe into their worldview, thus giving rise to a distinctive far right conception of Europe. In particular, it shows how they employed the three concepts of Identity, Liberty and Threat to present a distinctive conception of Europe as a bounded community, a space of freedom, and an endangered civilisation. It then illustrates how these concepts, along with the concept of National Interest, came together in the parties' positioning on the European Union. Through its diachronic focus, the thesis highlights how the parties display a strong level of continuity in their conception of Europe, using the same concepts to define it throughout the period of the study. These findings demonstrate the need to subject the equation of far right ideology and Euroscepticism to further scrutiny and acknowledge the complexity of far right thinking on Europe.

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*Se mille son le storie che il vento porta via,  
questa è la nostra storia, generazione mia.  
Venuti dall'inferno col fuoco nelle vene innalzeremo al cielo le nostre catene.  
E torneremo Europa... lo promettiamo a te. Europa torneremo uniti per te.*

*[If the wind carries away thousands of stories,  
this is our story, my generation.  
Coming from hell with fire in our veins, to the sky we will raise our chains.  
And we'll be back Europe... We promise it to you. Europe we will reunite for you.]*

- Amici del Vento, Amici del Vento, 1978

*Europa Nazione, Terza Via, Solidarietà occidentale.*

*[Nation Europe, Third Way, Western solidarity]*

- Movimento Sociale Italiano, Manifesto dell'Eurodestra, 1979

*L'Europe sera impériale ou ne sera pas.*

*[Europe will be imperial or will not be]*

- Jean-Marie Le Pen, Discours et Interventions, 1985 [1989]

*Polen, Grieken en Italianen van de eerste naoorlogse immigratiegolf hebben zich  
zonder grote problemen en zonder hulp van de overheid in onze maatschappij  
ingepast. Niet alleen omdat zij als Europeanen met ons verwant waren, maar omdat  
zij deel uitmaakten van dezelfde overkoepelende Europese beschaving.*

*[Poles, Greeks and Italians from the first post-War wave of immigration have  
adapted to our society, without great difficulties and without help from the  
Government. This is not only because they were related to us as Europeans, but  
because they are part of the same overarching European society.]*

- Vlaams Blok, Party Programme, 1999

*We are committed to a Europe of peoples and autochthonous groups of people which  
have developed through history, and firmly reject any artificial synchronisation of  
the diverse European languages and cultures by means of forced multiculturalism,  
globalisation and mass immigration. Europe shall not be reduced to a political  
project of the European Union.*

- Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, Party Programme, 2011

*I am confident that if we can safeguard freedom of speech and democracy, our  
civilization will be able to survive. Europe will not fall. We, Europe's patriots, will  
not allow it.*

- Geert Wilders, The Failure of Multiculturalism and How to Turn the Tide, 2011

*The European Union has become a prison of peoples. Each of the 28 countries that  
constitute it has slowly lost its democratic prerogatives to commissions and councils  
with no popular mandate. Every nation in the union has had to apply laws it did not  
want for itself. Member nations no longer determine their own budgets. They are  
called upon to open their borders against their will.*

- Marine Le Pen, After Brexit, the People's Spring Is Inevitable, 2016

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Born as a primarily economic union between six core countries, the European Union<sup>1</sup> has today expanded to a supranational political organisation encompassing a large majority of the European continent. The growth in size and in powers of the EU has not been without contestation and, over the years, some of its most fervent opponents have gathered significant amounts of electoral support. Far right parties<sup>2</sup> have arguably been amongst the most vocal critics of the project, leading some commentators to highlight ‘Europhobia’ as one of their distinguishing features (Marks and Wilson 2000: 457). However, if the European Union has undoubtedly been the *bête noire* of several of these parties, it is also worth noting that it has represented an enabling feature in their success, providing them with funding, visibility and political capital.

Importantly, the depiction of the far right as a ‘homogeneous and static Eurosceptic bloc’ (Almeida 2010: 244) hides a more complex picture made of ideological tensions, variations and U-turns. Furthermore, it fails to acknowledge that ‘Europe’ is not limited to the political project of the EU, and that one may well support the former, but not the latter. Thus, the opening quotes of this thesis should serve as a reminder that, even if today far right parties converge on criticism of the EU, what exactly Europe is, and how it should be assessed, has been open to contestation within the party family: it has been the subject of songs and political slogans, but also the object of fierce criticism; it has

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<sup>1</sup> While the European Union did not become ‘Union’ until the Maastricht Treaty, throughout the thesis the term ‘EU’ is used to refer both to the pre-Maastricht EEC and the post-Maastricht EU.

<sup>2</sup> While the literature has used a variety of terms to refer to a broadly similar group of parties, including radical right (Art 2011, Kitschelt and McGann 1995, Rydgren 2018), extreme right (Hainsworth 2000, Harrison and Bruter 2011, Ignazi 2003, Mudde 1996 and 2000, Schain et al. 2002), and variations on ‘populist radical right’ (Akkerman et al. 2016, Betz 1994, Herman and Muldoon 2019, Mudde 2007, 2017, Rydgren 2004), following Vasilopoulou (2018a: 6), I here use ‘far right’ as an umbrella term to encompass parties of the radical and extreme right. Based on the definition proposed by the German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution in the 1970s, parties of the extreme right are defined as those which reject the existing constitutional order, while radical right parties are those that while holding radical positions, broadly accept the existing democratic order (for more on the distinction, see for example Ignazi 2003: 25-34). While, where relevant in the analysis, the weight of this distinction will be acknowledged and discussed, this thesis considers that the beliefs brought forward by parties of the extreme and radical right are sufficiently similar to be discussed and studied together in the context of this research.

been reclaimed as a nation and potential empire but also as a ‘prison for its peoples’; it has been defined as a shared culture but also as a continent in decline. What, then, is the relationship between the far right and Europe, whether this be intended as a distinct civilisation or as the specific project of the EU? What do they mean by it, and how has it become a part of their ideology and political programmes?

This thesis seeks to address these questions by focusing specifically on the far right’s ideological understanding of Europe. Employing an in-depth interpretive and qualitative analysis of party documents produced between 1978 and 2017 by the French Front National (FN)<sup>3</sup> and the Italian Movimento Sociale Italiano/Alleanza Nazionale (MSI/AN), it analyses how Europe is viewed and incorporated in far right ideology. Its main aim is to understand what far right parties talk about when they talk about Europe and how this informs their positions on the project of European integration (their ‘ideology of Europe’).

## THE ARGUMENT

The core argument the thesis advances is that the MSI/AN and FN have created a distinctively far right conception of Europe by repurposing key elements of their ideology to integrate Europe in their worldview and define their positions on the EU.

The argument is developed in an empirical fashion by showing how the studied parties redeployed core concepts of far right ideology to define the meaning of Europe and their positions on the European Union. Drawing on Freedén’s morphological approach to analyse party documents produced between 1978 and 2017, the thesis focuses on how the parties employed the three concepts of Identity, Liberty and Threat to present a distinctive conception of Europe as a bounded community, a space of freedom and as an endangered civilisation. It then analyses the link between this understanding of Europe and the parties’ positions on the EU by illustrating how the concepts of Identity, Liberty and Threat, joined by the concept of National Interest, came together in the parties’ positioning on the European Union. In addition to teasing out these concepts and their meanings, this thesis’ diachronic focus also highlights that the parties have been consistent in their use of these notions by illustrating how while they have been defined

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<sup>3</sup> In 2018, the Front National changed its name to ‘Rassemblement National’. Given that this thesis focuses on the period preceding the name change, however, it adopts the old nomenclature.

differently across parties and across time they have been constantly present throughout the studied period.

The chapter proceeds as follows. The first section reviews the relevant literature on the far right and Europe, identifying its key findings and limitations. It ends with the formulation of a number of research questions on the topic which remain to be addressed. The following section sketches out the key theoretical and methodological tenets of the study, as well as its contribution to existing research. The final section presents an outline of the remainder of this thesis.

## FAR RIGHT PARTIES AND EUROPE: THE RESEARCH AGENDA

The field of study of far right politics is a crowded one. If in the 1980s, Klaus Von Beyme (1988) could lament the absence of perspectives on far right parties, these have by now become one of the most studied party families in political science and beyond (Arzheimer 2018, Mudde 2013, 2016; for perspectives from other fields see for example Berezin 2009, Holmes 2000, Miller-Idriss 2017). Throughout the years, studies have tackled a variety of issues including the definition and ideological characteristics of far right parties (Carter 2018, Mudde 1996, 2000, 2007, Rydgren 2018), the reasons for their success (Amengay and Stockemer 2018, Art 2011, Arzheimer 2009, Caramani and Manucci 2019, Carter 2005, Kitschelt and McGann 1995, Morrow and Meadowcroft 2018, Norris 2005; see Eatwell 2003 for a review), and their impact on democratic politics and other parties (Abou-Chadi and Krause 2018, Eatwell and Mudde 2004, Herman and Muldoon 2019, Minkenberg 2001, Schain et al. 2002).

With the exception of their positions on immigration, comparatively less attention has been dedicated to mapping out far right positions on specific issues (although see Schori Liang 2007, Olsen 1999); however, in recent years there has been growing interest in studying the far right's positions on the EU. While the issue was conspicuously absent (or barely mentioned) in early seminal monographs on the far right (e.g., Betz 1994, Kitschelt and McGann 1995, Norris 2005), following the growth of Euroscepticism and the EU's multiple crises, it has acquired more prominence in recent works (e.g., Mudde 2007, Rydgren 2018). This has also been driven by the fact that Euroscepticism has increasingly imposed itself as a shared feature of the party family (Marks and Wilson

2000: 457; Gómez-Reino 2018: 63-64), and a ‘natural’ one given the far right’s oppositional role (Taggart 1998, Williams 2013, Sitter 2001) and its nationalist ideology (Marks and Wilson 2000, Hooghe et al. 2002, Halikiopoulou et al. 2012).

While there are few works dedicated specifically to the relationship between far right parties and Europe, and even less where a sustained analysis of that relationship is central (for notable book-length exceptions, see Polyakova 2015 and Vasilopoulou 2018a), it is nonetheless possible to distinguish three different strands in this growing body of research: first, an historical-interpretive strand; second, a comparative politics strand; and third, a ‘Europeanisation’ strand. This thesis will focus primarily on the first two strands; however, its findings may also contribute to the third strand.

The first strand of literature is the oldest of the three and consists primarily of works seeking to understand both the historical roots of the relationship between the far right and Europe, and the conception of Europe in the far right. It stresses that the idea of Europe has a long pedigree in far right thinking and teases out the complexities and contradictions involved in its definition. This literature is also mindful of the fact that Europe cannot be reduced to the political body of the EU, leading it to study Europe in its larger sense of continent and civilisation.

The study of the far right’s historical relationship with Europe has attracted some attention from historians in particular. Griffin (1994), for example, provided an overview of how Europe has been interpreted in the fascist tradition and in the post-war far right milieus. Setting out to explore how ‘Europe can be mythically created in the mind of the beholder’ and citing prominent post-war far right figures such as Bardèche, Evola, Mosley and Thiriart, he shows that inter-war fascism presented a pan-European face which sought to overcome national boundaries to put a halt to the decadence of Europe. This pan-Europeanism survived in many post-war far right circles, demonstrating both the relevance of the idea of Europe for the far right as well as the fact that nationalism and transnationalism are not necessarily antithetical forces (on this, see also Gosewinkel 2018). Mammone (2011, 2015) further expanded these points by investigating the transnational history of post-war far right parties in France and Italy, highlighting the importance of ideas of Europe in their collaboration. Meanwhile, Tamir Bar-On (2008, 2011) discussed more thoroughly the fascist lineage and persistence of pan-Europeanism in the intellectual circles of the French *Nouvelle Droite*.

While some attention has been dedicated to the historical positions of the far right on Europe, the main focus of this first strand of literature has been the analysis of the content of far right positions on European integration and Europe more broadly. Usually as part of larger monographs on the far right (Hainsworth 2008, Mudde 2007) or on political parties in the EU (Fieschi et al. 1996, Startin 2018), this literature stresses the parties' opposition to the process of European integration, but also the complexities involved in their positions on Europe. On the first point, Hainsworth (2008: 82), for example, argues that far right parties view European integration as 'an encroaching, bureaucratic and elitist phenomenon' which undermines 'constructs and values, such as the nation-state, national identity, state sovereignty, deeply embedded roots and national belonging'. Adding a layer of complexity to these accounts, however, some authors have shown that the far right's view of Europe has been dominated by a series of contradictions and ambiguities which are lost in definitions of them as 'Eurosceptics'. In fact, while there is a tendency to present the far right as a single anti-EU bloc, this view is misleading because it conflates views of Europe and views of the EU, and fails to acknowledge that far right parties have converged on anti-EU positions rather than started from them.

The ambiguities involved in the far right's view of Europe have attracted the attention of scholars since the early 1990s, when they became most evident in the form of an opposition between 'Europe' and 'the EU'. One of the first works to note this distinction in far right thinking between Europe and the EU was Duranton-Crabol's (1991) French language monograph dedicated to analysing the cultural identity of the far right. In it, she argued that the far right's positions on Europe were dominated by two tendencies: on one hand, they opposed the EU because it led to the retreat of traditional identities; on the other, they espoused a marked Europeanism as a form of 'national identity transposed to the level of the peoples of Europe' (1991: 34). In a study on the positions of the Front National, Alain Bihr (1993) made a similar point, stressing how Europe was both a 'menaced identity' and a 'menacing identity'. As he put it, the FN's view of Europe was deeply ambivalent as they saw it as both a 'complementary identity' which 'extended and reinforced' the national identity, but also as a 'competing, even contradictory identity' which worked as a deterrent (1993: 61-62). Perhaps most clearly, Fieschi et al. (1996) have presented this as an opposition between an idealised Europe and the realities of European integration. In particular, they argued that Europe presented a conundrum for far right parties because, on the one hand, they felt the need to unite in

front of an external threat; on the other, they needed to reconcile this with the 'natural' national sentiment. This translated into a discourse which appealed to an abstract European civilisation, but also presented a stark opposition to the reality of European integration and the sacrifices it demanded in terms of sovereignty. This ambivalence remains today, with far right parties claiming an attachment to Europe as a civilisation, but also opposing vividly the European Union as a concrete body and justifying this on grounds of attachment to Europe (Adamson and Johns 2008, Brubaker 2017, Glencross 2019; see also Brown 2019, and Wodak and Boukala 2015 on how far right actors can use this bond as a tool of exclusion).

In addition to being ambivalent in their assessment of Europe, it is also important to note that far right parties have not always been anti-EU. This point is highlighted by Cas Mudde (2007) amongst others. In his study on the far right in Europe, he stressed that many far right parties started off from pro-EU positions but changed following the end of the Cold War and the signing of the Maastricht Treaty (2007: 182). Almeida (2010: 241-244) thus suggested that seeing them as a 'static', Eurosceptic bloc ignored the fact that, in the past, the European Union acted as a counterweight to the Soviet Union in far right thinking. While attachment to the European project was never unqualified, as it was often seen as being either too influenced by the United States or in need of some kind of reform (for example to reduce the 'democratic deficit'), 'hard' Euroscepticism was not a dominant feature until the 1990s (on the distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' Euroscepticism, see Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b: 2).

In the context of parties whose nationalist or 'nativist' ideology (Minkenberg 2003: 151, Eatwell 2000: 412-413, Mudde 2007: 19, Harrison and Bruter 2011; the tenets of far right ideology will be further discussed in the next chapter) would appear to predispose them negatively towards a transnational concept, this interpretive strand has the merit of highlighting that the relationship between the far right and Europe is complicated and scattered with ambiguities. In focusing primarily on understanding what parties had to say about Europe, however, this strand has dedicated less attention to the development of theoretical accounts that could help explain such positions and the ambiguities involved in them. Addressing this limitation has been one of the objectives of the second strand of literature which, grounding itself in comparative politics, has sought to build theories concerning far right positioning on European integration.



At the heart of the second strand of literature on far right parties and the EU is the question ‘how can far right Euroscepticism be explained?’ Drawing on a wider body of work dedicated to explaining how political parties and voters position themselves on the issue of European integration (e.g., De Vries 2018, Hooghe et al. 2002, Kopecky and Mudde 2002, Leconte 2010, Leruth et al. 2018, Marks and Wilson 2000, McLaren 2002, Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008a, 2008b, Taggart 1998), it seeks to account for how far right parties came to oppose the European Union. Compared with the first strand of literature, this strand is narrower in scope as it centres exclusively on positions on the EU, and its focus is explanatory rather than exploratory.

Research on far right Euroscepticism mainly draws on two types of explanations: one which is rooted in the parties’ system of beliefs, and the other on the parties’ strategic considerations and political opportunity structures. These explanations need not be seen as antithetical but, rather, as mutually reinforcing (De Vries and Edwards 2009: 19, Gómez-Reino and Llamazares 2013: 794) or determining different aspects of a party’s opposition to EU integration (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b: 13-14).

The first set of explanations conceptualises political parties as actors limited in their political choices by forms of ‘bounded rationality’ (Marks and Wilson 2000: 433-434). Following this logic, the positions they hold on new issues are expected to be ‘framed within the available stock of ideas, although they may incrementally recast such ideas’ (Kitschelt 1994: 265). As a result, their positions on European integration are expected to be determined by previously held ideological beliefs, often measured in terms of Left/Right positioning (Aspinwall 2002) or placement on the GAL/TAN axis (Hooghe et al. 2002). For far right parties, this leads to an expectation that they will oppose European integration because of the central role occupied by the nation in their ideology. This is well captured by Hooghe et al.’s (2002: 976-978) assertion that far right parties ‘react against a series of perceived threats to the national community. [...] European integration combines several of these threats and poses one more: it undermines national sovereignty’. Gómez-Reino (2018: viii) stresses a similar point when she claims that nationalist parties’ position on European integration are shaped by their position on key territorial and cultural cleavages. Stressing the malleability of nationalism by looking at both far right parties and minority nationalist parties, she suggests that the far right’s combination of the defence of the state and ethnocentric exclusionary policies shapes its views against EU integration (2017: 63). While she notes that in earlier years, there was

a tension between a cultural vision of Europe which led them to pro-integration positions and issues of political sovereignty which led them to favour a confederal model of association, their positions on European integration have become increasingly critical and based precisely on issues of national sovereignty. Drawing on nationalism as an explanation for far right Euroscepticism, Halikiopoulou et al. (2012: 510) also stress that far right parties oppose the EU as a body that threatens the ‘autonomy, unity and identity of the nation’. In particular, they claim that radical right parties primarily oppose the EU on ethnic grounds, seeing its heterogeneous nature as a ‘threat to the nation's cultural homogeneity’ (2012: 508).

The second set of explanations focuses more on parties as actors taking part in electoral competition and, hence, guided by strategic calculations. Instead of focusing on how parties’ ideas shape their positions on European integration, these explanations focus on how their position within the domestic political system and their electoral objectives provide them with strategic incentives to support or oppose the EU. Thus, they shift attention from long-term factors to more short-term issues such as domestic constraints and the structure of political competition at the national level. Taggart (1998: 382), for example, defines Euroscepticism as a ‘touchstone of dissent’ and argues that marginal political parties (including far right ones) can use their positions on the EU to differentiate themselves from established political actors and gain attention. In a similar vein, Sitter (2001) claims that opposition to the EU is primarily driven by the politics of government and opposition. De Vries and Edwards (2009) discuss this with respect to far right parties, arguing that these parties can benefit from opposition to the EU by presenting themselves as the only actors that defend the nation from it (see also Kriesi et al. 2006). Almeida (2010: 141) stresses this point further, suggesting that far right Euroscepticism is part of a strategy to differentiate themselves from mainstream parties and ‘sustain a role as tribunes against the “political establishment”’, as well as a way to reframe programmatic commitments such as opposition to immigration and the critique of the domestic and international elites (2010: 243). In the most detailed study of far right Euroscepticism to date, Vasilopoulou (2018a) makes strategic claims central to her analysis. While acknowledging the role of ideology in determining the type of Euroscepticism brought forward by the parties (see also Vasilopoulou 2011: 226), she argues that far right parties perform a balancing act between interest representation, electoral politics and party competition in defining their positions on the EU. Thus, she shows that depending on

their strategic goals and position within the electoral system, they will adopt different levels of Euroscepticism. Far right Euroscepticism, then, may be viewed not only as an ideological phenomenon, but also as the result of the strategic calculations of the far right.

Compared with the first strand, this second strand of literature has the merit of bridging literature on Euroscepticism and work on the far right and offer a theoretical account of the link between the two. However, it also suffers from a number of shortcomings which limit its ability to develop a complete picture of the far right's relationship with Europe. Theoretically, by focusing more on outcome than on process, the ideological accounts in particular remain rather scant on the development of the link between far right ideology and opposition to European integration. The previously cited Hooghe et al. (2002: 976-977), for example, only dedicate a few lines to explaining the theoretical rationale behind far right opposition to European integration. This means that while they are able to establish a connection between far right ideology and Euroscepticism, the steps leading from one to the other are left unexplored. Even in cases when theorisation has been more central, existing studies have been limited in terms of the materials used, focusing particularly on party manifestoes which, it has been argued elsewhere, do not fully capture party ideology (e.g., Mudde 2000: 21-22) or the nuances involved in it (Flood and Soborski 2018: 37-38). Halikiopoulou et al. (2012), for example, develop a persuasive theoretical account to explain the link between Euroscepticism and far right nationalism. However, their reliance on a quantitative analysis of Euromanifesto data and their exclusive focus on opposition to the EU also means that the ambiguities involved in the far right's positioning on Europe teased out in the first body of literature go mostly unnoticed and unexplained. In short, while these accounts have some merits, they can only tell part of the (ideological) story about the relationship between the far right and Europe.

Perhaps most noticeably, both the accounts from the first and the second strand of literature suffer from a limited theorisation of 'ideology'. In fact, many of these works have tended to limit themselves to describing the tensions provoked by Europe or to relating these to previously held beliefs, without relating this more deeply to how ideologies work. While this is a common issue with studies of ideologies that tend to focus more on the effects of ideology rather than on their structure (see Freeden 1998a: 48 and chapter two of this thesis), it means that we have a limited understanding of how Europe fits within far right ideology, how far right parties came to view it in a certain

way and why conflicts arose in their understanding of Europe. In other words, we do not know whether there is a method to their ideological view of Europe, implying that the meaning of Europe and positions expressed on the EU ‘make sense’ within the parties’ system of belief and are integrated in it. Although one might claim that this is unproblematic, the fact that these parties professed to be attached to Europe, and were initially in favour of European integration before turning against it, does at least warrant the question of how the same ideology could lead to different outcomes, or, if one does not accept the idea that parties are somehow bound by ideology, how this strategic choice could be justified in such a way that they still appeared to be motivated by certain principles.

Altogether, this suggests the need to further scrutinize the place of Europe in far right ideology, by refocusing our attention to the processes by which Europe has become a part of it. It also requires studying not just positions on European integration, but on Europe more broadly, so as to be able to capture the differences between the two. Europe is not limited to the political project of the European Union. In regard to the far right, it was previously noted that they consider Europe to be something beyond the EU. Europe, in their view, is a specific civilisation, characterised by a shared culture. This distinction is not one that has been made exclusively by them; there is a rich body of literature that seeks to understand how one might define ‘Europe’ and the ‘Europeans’ (e.g. Pagden 2002, Davies 1996, den Boer et al. 1995). Even joining the European Union requires that a prospective member state persuade the others of its ‘Europeanness’ and, as the case of Turkey shows, the question is not merely of a geographical nature but touches upon larger cultural questions. In short, because Europe is a ‘protean’ (Pagden 2002) and extremely ‘malleable’ concept (Flood 2002: 7), knowing what far right parties feel about European integration may tell us very little about what they think about Europe more broadly, and how they can use this malleability to their advantage. Thus, when studying their understanding of Europe, it is pertinent to look at not only what they have to say about the EU, but also how this relates to the concept of Europe that preceded it. This entails looking at references to Europe as a geographical space and understanding its boundaries, as well as analysing what the parties think unifies Europe and Europeans and makes them culturally distinct from other peoples.

The discussion so far has centred on two strands of literature focusing primarily on what far right parties had to say about Europe (and why they said it); however, it is important to note the existence of a third strand of literature on the far right and Europe that looks into what the parties did and did not do when it came to being a part of the EU’s institutions, and what they gained from this belonging. Shifting the gaze from party

positions on Europe and the EU to party engagement with the EU, this third strand of studies on far right parties and Europe focuses on their behaviour within the European institutions, as well as the practical and symbolic advantages they gained from this activity. In this sense, it concerns the ‘Europeanisation’ of the far right because it studies how the process of European integration has affected and changed them (on the concept of Europeanisation and how it may be applied to political parties, see for example Almeida 2012, Hertner 2018, Hix and Lord 1997, Ladrech 2002, Mair 2000, Poguntke et al. 2007).

Within this body of literature, it has often been noted that the EU has provided far right parties with a number of ideational and strategic resources which have helped them establish themselves in the political system. Fieschi (2000: 521) summarised this most clearly when she argued that, ‘in spite of their anti-Europeanism, these parties have gained enormously from the solemnity, ritual and political symbolism of the European arena and from the credibility derived through seats in the European Parliament (EP)’. More recently, Polyakova (2015) went even further, arguing that the persistence of nationalism and the success of the far right could be read as an unintended consequence of and a direct response to the process of European economic integration. In other words, it appears that, while they have been critical of the process itself, far right parties have also been beneficiaries of it.

In terms of the advantages that far right parties have gained from the process of European integration, it is worth noting a few. First, the European Union has provided many of them with elected office. In fact, while historically far right parties have often struggled to gain representation at the national level, the ‘second order’ nature of EU elections (Reif and Schmitt 1980, Marsh 1998, Hix and Marsh 2011), coupled with a proportional electoral system, has made it easier for them to win seats in the European Parliament than in their national parliaments (Hainsworth 2008: 83, Almeida 2010: 243-244, Reungoat 2018). This has come with a number of practical advantages because, as Norris (2005: 255-256) stressed, winning seats allowed far right parties to gain ‘legitimacy, resources and patronage’ which could then be used to consolidate their results. Second, by participating in European elections and gaining elected office, far right parties have also been able to share their ideas more widely and voice their concerns in an additional arena. This has given them more visibility and influence on the policy agenda (Schulte-Cloos 2018). Third, the rise in salience of European integration, in

conjunction with the parties' ability to establish a level of 'ownership' of it (Petrocik 1996, Van der Brug and Van Spanje 2009, Vasilopoulou 2011) has also offered them an opportunity to reinforce the electoral link with their voters and gain new votes by covering positions on integration previously ignored by the mainstream (Gómez-Reino 2018: 77, Gómez-Reino and Llamazares 2013, Werts et al. 2012; although see also McDonnell and Werner 2018 on the limitations of far right party-voter linkages on the EU issues). In a study of the Front National, Reungoat (2014) illustrated these dynamics by showing how the EU provided the party with both practical and symbolic resources that helped it survive and grow. In practical terms, she argues that the EU gave the FN and its MEPs the financial means and institutional framework to gain in political experience and dedicate themselves fully to the profession of politicians. In symbolic terms, Reungoat suggests that, internally, successes in the European arena could be sold to the party membership as a demonstration of the success of the party's ideas; externally, on the other hand, the EP mandates represented symbols of external legitimation and allowed the party to appear less isolated, especially through alliance with likeminded parties abroad (2014: 133-136).

Far right parties have not only been passive beneficiaries of the process of European integration, but have also actively sought to 'use' it to their own advantage (on the notion of 'usage' see Woll and Jacquot 2010). This has been already apparent in the 'strategic' accounts of far right opposition to European integration, but has been shown even more clearly in the study of the transnational practices of the far right (e.g., Caiani 2018, Zuquete 2015: 74-78), with authors such as Startin (2010, 2018), and McDonnell and Werner (2017, 2019) arguing that far right parties strategically used transnational collaboration as a legitimacy-enhancing tool. Startin (2010: 439), for example, highlighted how the creation of the short-lived Identity, Tradition and Sovereignty Group in the European Parliament was guided by the belief that collaboration at the EU level would represent 'a clear and transparent confirmation that their parties are able to play by the existing rules of the game within a clear democratic framework, thus allowing them to negate some of the accusations of a broadly hostile media and political class about the group's lack of democratic integrity'. In a similar vein, McDonnell and Werner (2017) have shown how concerns about legitimacy and respectability at the national level helped explain why and with whom far right parties decided to collaborate in the European

Parliament. This suggests that the parties have been well aware of the opportunities offered by European integration and have been willing to use them to their advantage.

While this body of literature does not represent the central focus of this thesis, an in-depth analysis of the relationship between the far right and Europe can offer some insights into how taking part in the process of European integration has shaped far right ideology. In this sense, it may be able to show how ‘Europeanised’ far right ideology has become and indicate the adaptations that European integration has led to. As the conclusion will suggest, in the future this may form the basis for work that concerns how far right parties have benefitted from holding certain positions on European integration.

Summing up, the far right’s view of Europe is not as straightforward as one might expect. Its puzzling features include: positions of support for Europe that seemingly contradict the centrality of the nation in their ideology, and appear as radically different compared to the positions they hold on the European Union; changes in their positions on Europe which led them from support for forms of European integration as a protective mechanism, to rejection of it as a destructive one; and a tendency to benefit from a process that they explicitly reject. With this in mind, this thesis proposes to study the far right’s understanding of Europe and positions on the EU (in short, its ‘ideology of Europe’) so as to understand its nature and contents, and disentangle its complexities. This entails answering two questions:

1. How have far right parties viewed Europe through ideological lenses and how have they incorporated it in their system of beliefs?
2. How has their ideology informed their positions on the European Union?

These two questions guide the rest of this thesis, with the objective of understanding what far right parties talk about when they talk about Europe and how this informs their positions on the EU.

Beyond the intrinsic value of seeking to understand a complex and somewhat puzzling phenomenon, there are three good reasons why these questions are worth investigating in more depth. First of all, one might cite the ‘gap in the literature’ argument. In particular, the earlier section pointed towards a partially answered question within the systematic investigation of the far right’s understanding of Europe and positions on the

EU. A study analysing how ideology plays into the emergence of a certain idea of Europe can thus add depth to existing work on the relationship between the far right and Europe.

Second, this study of the far right's relationship with Europe may be looked at as a 'heuristic device', allowing one to observe broader tendencies within far right ideology. In particular, we may look at this study as one focusing on an instance of ideological change and how parties deal with it. It can provide us with a sense of how they integrate new issues, and the extent to which in this context ideological consistency appears to be of value to them. It may also advance a reflection on how this integration of new issues pushes the boundaries of an ideology and shapes it as a result. This last point is particularly interesting given the transnational nature of Europe and the tensions it is therefore likely to generate in parties that value the nation above all things.

Finally, a study of this kind presents a starting point for a broader reflection on the future of the EU. At a time where far right parties are a growing force and increasingly normal feature of the European Parliament, it is as important as ever to understand how they think and have thought about Europe. Their presence in the institutions is likely to shape them from the inside, and their political relevance in electoral contests across Europe can significantly impact the way citizens approach the European project. Studying the far right's vision of Europe, this thesis will hopefully be able to give a keen sense of some of the challenges that lie ahead of the Union in the coming years.

## THE FAR RIGHT'S IDEOLOGY OF EUROPE: THE APPROACH

Building on previous literature, and keeping its shortcomings in mind, this study is built around two central tenets: first, it grounds the study of far right positions on Europe in the literature of political ideologies; and second, it proceeds to an in-depth empirical investigation of the far right's ideology of Europe by focusing on two case studies: the Movimento Sociale Italiano/Alleanza Nazionale (Italian Social Movement/National Alliance, MSI/AN) in Italy and the Front National (National Front, FN) in France.

In order to investigate how Europe is understood through far right ideological lenses and capture the process by which it becomes a part of their ideology, this thesis draws on Michael Freedman's morphological approach (1998a), which considers that ideologies are best thought of as constellations of mutually-decontesting concepts. Political concepts, in this view, do not have



fixed meanings, but rather acquire different meanings (are ‘decontested’) in relation to one another. Following this view, this thesis breaks down the far right’s ideology of Europe into its component concepts by looking at what else the studied parties talk about when they talk about Europe. It then analyses the way in which these parties defined the meaning of Europe through these concepts and how this shaped their understanding of the process of European integration as a whole.

The second tenet of this study is an empirical analysis of the far right’s ideology of Europe. This thesis opts for an in-depth interpretive and qualitative analysis of party documents produced by two far right parties: the French Front National (FN), and the Italian Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI) and its successor party, Alleanza Nazionale (AN). To study the parties’ ideology, the research looks at party documents produced by the MSI/AN and FN between 1978 and 2017. The chosen starting date is shortly before the first EP election, at which time it is expected that the parties would start discussing Europe more prominently. Although, where necessary, this thesis also includes references to previous documents. The documents were collected through archival, internet and library research, which yielded a corpus of 397 documents (175 for the MSI/AN and 222 for the FN) comprising manifestoes, party congress documents, party newspaper and magazine articles, speeches and interviews. The documents are analysed by means of manual concept coding, a form of qualitative coding aimed at identifying the general ideas behind the data (Saldaña 2016: 119-220), and close textual interpretation in order to reconstruct the meaning of Europe in far right ideology.

One last point concerning the way in which the parties’ documents are approached is worth mentioning. In line with the interpretive commitment to understand ‘how humans conceive of their worlds, the language they use to describe them and other elements constituting that social world’ (Schwartz Shea and Yanow 2012: 52), this thesis seeks to understand far right parties in their own words and interpret them as much as possible according to their own logic. Thus, unlike some more critical approaches to the study of the far right (e.g., Wodak and Richardson 2012, Wodak 2013), it does not purport to assess the ‘correctness’ of the statements brought forward by parties or try to ‘unmask’ their agenda, but merely traces the logics they employ and studies the views they adopt with the aim of digging deeper into their understanding of the political world. It considers that there is value in understanding parties, even unsavoury ones, in their own words, as this may help understand why a sympathetic reader might find them attractive. While this does not entail subscribing to that world view or taking all they say at face value, it does mean taking them seriously and seeking to understand how they would want to be thought of and, most likely, how many of those who do follow them see them.

## THE CONTRIBUTION

In studying the far right's ideology of Europe, this thesis makes four substantive contributions. Empirically, it analyses a corpus of mostly unstudied primary sources. This is particularly true for the Italian case, where very little work has been done on analysing the ideology of the parties starting from primary sources (for exceptions, see Griffin 1996, Ignazi 1989 and 1998, Tarchi 2003). Even for the French case, where more studies have focused on the Front National's ideology (most recently Alduy and Wahnich 2015, Davies 1999, Dézé 2008, Reungoat 2015), Europe has represented a marginal, rather than central, focus of the analysis.

Methodologically, taking up Flood and Soborski's (2018: 38) invitation to give 'proper attention' to the study of ideology in works on Euroscepticism, it studies far right positions on Europe through an in-depth interpretive and qualitative analysis over a long time span. In a field where comparative quantitative research based on expert surveys and analysis of manifesto data dominates (Mudde 2012: 197-198, Vasilopoulou 2018c: 26-31), this thesis presents a novel approach that not only draws on a wider body of sources than most studies on far right Euroscepticism (and is hence more likely to be reflective of 'ideology'), but also captures how parties responded to changes in the EU itself. As such, while the scope of analysis remains limited to two parties, the findings complement existing studies on far right Euroscepticism by providing them qualitative depth and an historical perspective. In addition, by viewing 'Europe' more broadly, it enhances our understanding of how ideas of Europe differ from, but also interact with, understandings of the EU.

In theoretical terms, this thesis bridges the gap between studies on ideology and research on far right parties' positions on Europe. Adopting a morphological approach, it suggests a way to conceptualise far right ideology and study how new issues such as Europe are integrated in it. This account is then developed by looking into how the MSI/AN and FN integrated Europe in their ideology. This makes it possible not only to establish a relationship between far right ideology and holding a certain idea of Europe, but also to observe the process leading from one to the other and understand which elements in the MSI/AN and FN's ideology mattered the most to their understanding of Europe.

Finally, and most importantly, this thesis' key finding – namely, that the MSI/AN and FN drew on existing concepts in their ideology to define their positions on Europe and the EU – complement, qualify and adds to existing knowledge on the far right. Beyond positing a link between far right ideology and opposition to European integration, it shows how ideology mattered in the far right's understanding of Europe and why the link between far right nationalism and Euroscepticism is less straightforward than one might think. It also highlights that, even when the parties changed positions on European integration, they remained deeply consistent in terms of the concepts they used to explain those positions. As a result, the thesis leads one to reconsider some assumptions both about far right parties, and about the link between their ideology and their views on Europe.

## PLAN OF THE THESIS

The following chapters are organised as follows. Chapter two presents the conceptual and methodological tenets of this study. The opening section of the chapter briefly introduces the field of ideology studies and explains how Michael Freeden's morphological approach informs the present study. Following this introductory section, the second part of the chapter develops two expectations in response to this thesis' research questions: first, that far right parties will employ central concepts in their ideology to define the meaning of Europe; second, that they will do the same when determining their positions on the European Union. The final part of the chapter outlines the research design of the study, presenting this thesis' empirical strategy.

Chapters three to six constitute the bulk of the empirical part of the research and are arranged thematically around the concepts and discourses forming the far right's ideology of Europe. Chapter three examines how the MSI/AN and FN employed the concept of Identity to define Europe, arguing that its use led to an 'opening' of the parties' ideology. Presenting the concept of Identity as a key 'boundary-building' feature of nationalism which creates in- and out-groups, the chapter shows that the studied parties used it to define Europe and the Europeans as a distinct civilisation with clear boundaries separating it from foreign 'Others'. It also shows how the MSI/AN and FN claimed to belong to this civilisation, implying a positive relationship between their national and European belonging. The chapter concludes by illustrating how the use of the concept of

Identity to decontest Europe led to an ‘opening’ of the parties’ ideology, making them appear less ‘closed’ than commonly assumed.

Chapter four analyses the second concept that the MSI/AN and FN drew upon to define Europe: namely, the concept of Liberty. Introducing Liberty as a ‘political’ feature of nationalism which serves to establish the rights of the nation, the chapter shows how the parties employed the concept to refer to ideas of European and national autonomy and democratic self-rule, as well as to ideas of European power outside its borders. The chapter shows the complexity of the relationship between the concept of Europe and that of Liberty, demonstrating that the MSI/AN and FN have viewed Europe both as a space of liberty and as a potential threat to their own nations’ freedom. The concluding section also argues that, by focusing on the concept of Liberty, the parties drew on ideas that were not exclusive to them, but were part of a shared way of thinking about the nation.

Chapter five moves away from the parties’ ideological core and into the area of adjacency, advancing the contention that both the MSI and the FN (but not AN) viewed Europe as endangered by a series of threats. Presenting the concept of Threat as a distinctive feature of far right ideology, the chapter shows how the MSI and the FN portrayed Europe as endangered by a series of internal, external and diffuse threats. Drawing on Moffitt’s (2016) discussion of the ‘populist performance of crisis’, it is argued that this use of the ‘politics of emergency’ allowed the parties to present themselves as ‘providential’ actors who were aware of the danger Europe was in, and could therefore save it from decline and disappearance.

Chapter six leaves behind the analytical reconstruction of the character of far right ideology, and focuses on how the parties employed the previously studied concepts to define their positions on the European Union. Looking at ideology as a form of praxis-oriented political thought, it illustrates how the MSI/AN and FN employed the previously studied concepts, along with the additional concept of National Interest, to define their positions on European integration as a concrete political issue. In contrast to the view of far right parties as ‘populist’ actors that will stand for anything, it shows how the parties were consistent in terms of the concepts they used to determine their positions on the EU. The use of these concepts in the definition of policy, the chapter concludes, made it possible for the parties to stress commitment to core principles in their ideology and present themselves as principled actors, thus serving both strategic and ideological functions.

Chapter seven briefly summarises the findings and explains how they contribute to existing research on far right parties and Europe, and to the study of far right ideology more broadly. It explores their implications and suggests three possible avenues for future research. These include: consolidating the study by looking at more far right parties; analysing how parties from other party families have integrated Europe in their ideology; and, finally, exploring further how ‘essentially contested concepts’ are used in day-to-day politics.

## 2. STUDYING THE FAR RIGHT'S IDEOLOGY OF EUROPE

The previous chapter established the far right's ideology of Europe as the thesis' key area of interest. In particular, it stressed the need to study the two following interrelated questions:

1. How have far right parties viewed Europe through ideological lenses and how have they incorporated it in their system of beliefs?
2. How has their ideology informed their positions on the European Union?

This chapter explains how these questions are addressed in practice. The opening section defines the aims and methods of ideological analysis, and explains how these are used to approach the study of the far right's ideology of Europe. The second section of the chapter develops some expectations concerning the answers to these questions. Rather than being formal hypotheses, these are better thought of as propositions meant to guide the reader through the empirical material and allow her to assess the validity of the author's own interpretation. The concluding section outlines the research design adopted in the study, presenting the author's empirical strategy in approaching the three questions and answering them.

### STUDYING THE FAR RIGHT'S IDEOLOGY OF EUROPE

*'Ideology is the most elusive concept in the whole of social sciences'*

- David McLellan, *Ideology*, 1995

Creating definitions is a key task in the social sciences, and even more so when one is dealing with a contentious concept. A scholar, looking for a straightforward answer to the question, 'what is ideology?' will likely struggle to find one. Hamilton (1987: 20-21), for example, identified a non-exhaustive list of 27 different definitions and features of the

term, while Michael Freeden (2006: 3) defined it as ‘the problem-child of political analysis’. Not only has ideology been hampered by conceptual obscurity, it has also been vilified as a form of ‘false consciousness’ in the Marxist tradition (Marx and Engels 1976 [1932], but see also Leopold 2013 on the different ways in which Marx and Engels used the term), a concept with unclear boundaries (Mullins 1972: 499-502), a form of ‘bad theory’ (Freeden 2000: 302), and even as a perverse ‘pseudoscience’ and a totalising doctrine (see for example Arendt 1953, Crick 2013 [1962], Popper 2013 [1945]). Thus, while one may not agree with McLellan’s view that it is ‘the most elusive concept in the social sciences’, it is certainly one that is rich in meanings, not all positive and not all of them compatible with one another.

This thesis follows the more recent trend of viewing ideology as a broadly neutral concept (e.g. Freeden 1998, Geertz 1973, Knight 2006, Seliger 1976).<sup>4</sup> Ideologies are regarded as ‘systems of political thinking, loose or rigid, deliberate or unintended, through which individuals and groups construct an understanding of the political world they, or those who preoccupy their thoughts, inhabit, and then act on that understanding’ (Freeden 1998a: 3). In this conception, ideologies therefore have two factors: first, a specific ‘worldview’, and second, a ‘programme for action’ informed by it. Within this context, far right ideology is approached as one such system of political thinking, which defines and describes the world from a specific perspective and uses this understanding to inform political action.

Having identified and defined the object of analysis, one might next ask how its study should be approached. The scholar of ideologies is presented with a number of options (see Leader Maynard and Mildenberger 2018 for a review of approaches in political science, and Martill 2017 for a review in the field of international relations). In the field of political science, studies of ideology often make use of spatial models in which party positions are quantified and studied in terms of their place on a certain number of issue dimensions. While these approaches have undeniable advantages in cases where one wishes to study a large number of parties, they are poorly suited to the study of meanings and understandings that is at the heart of this thesis.

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<sup>4</sup> Note that Seliger distinguishes between a restrictive and an inclusive definition of ideology. The former only applies to ‘extremist beliefs and parties’ which systematically distort the truth, while the latter refers to a conception which considers ideology to be a feature of all belief systems. It is in this second, broad sense that he studies it.

With this in mind, the thesis turns to an interpretive approach for the study of ideology: Michael Freeden's (1998a) morphological approach. The morphological approach is used to understand how far right parties integrate Europe in their ideology by focusing on the concepts they employ to discuss it. Given the thesis' interest in the specific idea of Europe, this approach appeared particularly appropriate because it takes concepts and conceptual structures as the analytical focus. Furthermore, in a study of parties whose positions on Europe have tended to vary, it was considered likely to provide a keen sense of the nature and depth of such changes. Since morphological analysis focuses on concepts rather than individual policies, it is better able to capture instances of ideological continuity at the level of ideas that might not be perceptible when focusing exclusively on policies. While the thesis does not adopt a fully-fledged morphological approach, since this is usually used to analyse ideologies as a whole, its main tenets offer an important conceptualisation of ideological structures and a helpful entry point into the study of Europe in far right ideology.

## THE MORPHOLOGICAL APPROACH

In his seminal book *Ideologies and Political Theory* (1998a), Michael Freeden set out with the ambition to refocus the study of ideology on the conceptual structures that underlie it and provide a theoretically informed method to study such structures. Lamenting the tendency of studies of ideology to represent ideologies as 'tantamount to what they do' (1998a: 48), he asserted the need for scholars to open the 'black box' of ideology and start studying its configuration. Ever since, a number of scholars have followed him in this endeavour, adopting the morphological approach to study a variety of ideologies in different settings (e.g., Atkins 2011 on New Labour, Bajpai 2011 on nationalism and group rights in India, Franks et al. 2018 on anarchism, Talshir 2002 on green parties, Turner 2011 on neoliberalism). Three elements may be identified as key to this approach: first, the study of concepts as the building blocks of ideologies; second, the analytical reconstruction of ideological structures; and third, a focus on context in studying the first two.

Political concepts are at the heart of Freeden's approach. These are defined as 'complex ideas that inject order and meaning into observed or anticipated sets of political phenomena and hold together an assortment of related notions' (1998a: 52). Familiar



concepts include Liberty, Equality and Justice; and ideologies, he claims, are best thought of as specific configurations of such ‘essentially contested concepts’, that is, concepts ‘the proper use of which inevitably involves endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users’ (Gallie 1955: 169). Thus, while all ideologies are expected to be formed of similar concepts, different traditions will attach different meanings to them. These specific meanings will usually be the result of a series of time- and space-dependent judgements about the description and assembly of the concepts’ individual components, as well as the evaluations of such components (Freeden 1998a: 52).<sup>5</sup> The first job of the scholar of ideologies is to identify, describe and analyse these concepts, with the objective of understanding the component elements and specific meanings of the building blocks of any given ideology (Freeden 1998a: 48).

Political concepts alone, however, are insufficient for the study of ideology, as they rarely acquire meaning by themselves. Rather, in the morphological approach, they are considered to acquire a more definite meaning (or to be decontested) in relation to the other concepts that form an ideology, signifying that the scholar of ideologies should also be concerned with the relationship between different concepts. In addition, she should be aware of their specific place within a constellation, as this will provide a clearer view of the overall structure of the ideology being studied.

Concepts may be placed in a core, adjacent or peripheral position depending on their centrality to the ideology in question and may shift from one position to the other over time. Core concepts are the long-term and shared features of all known cases of a given ideology (Freeden 2013: 125). One can think, for example, of Liberty as a core concept of all forms of liberalism or of Equality as the core of any given instance of socialism. Core concepts are also those that hold the ideology together and thus shape its content most prominently (Freeden 2013: 125). Adjacent concepts are not as pervasive or ever-present as core concepts. However, they have the crucial role of ‘finessing the core and anchoring it—at least temporarily—into a more determinate and decontested semantic field’ (Freeden 2013: 125-126). Adjacent concepts can be culturally or logically adjacent, and flesh out the core concepts, leading to emphasising one aspect of the conceptual core over the other. Finally, ideologies have peripheral concepts that ‘add a vital gloss’ (Freeden 1998a: 78) to core and adjacent concepts. These peripheral concepts

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<sup>5</sup> This point will be further developed in Chapter five, when discussing the extent to which the concepts in the thesis are ‘far right’.

are of two types: ‘marginal’ concepts and ‘perimeter’ concepts. Marginal concepts are those whose relevance to the ideology is insubstantial. Perimeter concepts, on the other hand, while being placed in a peripheral position with respect to the centre, are key to the operation of ideology in real life contexts because they anchor it to reality. Unlike core and adjacent concepts, which allow the ideology to ‘function on a long-term and wide-space basis’ (Freeden 1998a: 79), perimeter concepts ‘enable them [ideologies] to gain relevance for specific issues, to incorporate and identify significant facts and practices, to embrace external change, and to provide the greater degree of precision necessary to interpret the core and adjacent concepts’ (Freeden 1998a: 79-80). Ideas and concepts within an ideology will usually be identified following a trajectory that goes from the centre to the periphery via adjacent concepts or vice versa, bearing in mind, however, that the road followed is usually only one among many possible ones (Freeden 1998a: 81).

Underlying the morphological approach is an appreciation not only of the complexity of ideologies, but also of their flexibility, both at the micro-level of individual concepts, and at the macro-level of ideological structures. At the macro-level, the previous section has shown that concepts can move from one position to the other within the ideology, acquiring more or less relevance with respect to other concepts, and even disappearing with time. Similarly, at the micro-level, the internal structure of individual concepts may evolve, leading them to shift into a different realm of meaning, privileging one understanding over the other. Importantly, shifts tend to be rooted in context-dependent judgements, showing how ideological change is inextricably linked to social and political dynamics. The implication of this observation is that ideologies are best studied in context and over time, as this will allow to appreciate the value of such dynamics.

While these points are somewhat skeletal and discuss only the most salient features of Freedén’s approach, they nonetheless allow one to tease out some of the main features of a study of the ideology of Europe, with clear methodological implications. First of all, they direct the researcher’s focus towards questions of structure and relationships. In other words, rather than merely looking at the content of an ideology or at an individual concept within it, one is invited to elucidate its key concepts and the way in which they mutually decontest each other within a broader configuration. The practical implication of this is that if one is to understand how far right parties understand Europe, it will be necessary to insert it in the broader constellation of concepts that make up their

ideology and operate a conceptual reconstruction of Europe's ideological space. Thus, to understand how Europe is brought in and anchored in an existing ideology, the researcher will have to identify which core and adjacent concepts allow for this integration. In addition, because ideology is constituted by both a worldview and a programme for action based on that worldview, she will have to perform a similar task to understand how a certain worldview translates into concrete positions on the European Union. Secondly, because ideologies are variable, this analysis should not focus exclusively on the here and now but should adopt a measure of diachronic analysis to allow for an appreciation of the shifting meanings of Europe and its relation to the ideological configuration as a whole. Finally, attention needs to be paid to the context of statements on Europe in order to show how ideologies are anchored in social, political and historical realities. These theoretical points will necessarily inform the research design of the thesis (which will be discussed in the final section of this chapter), as well as the way in which documents will be presented and analysed in the empirical analysis.

In sum, this section has presented a view of ideologies as 'systems of political thinking, loose or rigid, deliberate or unintended, through which individuals and groups construct an understanding of the political world they, or those who preoccupy their thoughts, inhabit, and then act on that understanding' (Freeden 1998a: 3) and has argued that the best way to study the far right's ideology of Europe is through Freeden's morphological approach. The next section sets out some expectations concerning the answers to those questions, before presenting the empirical strategy utilised for the study.

## SETTING SOME EXPECTATIONS

While the research questions of this thesis are all exploratory and inductive rather than explanatory and deductive in nature, it is nonetheless helpful to present a view of the possible answers to them that one might expect. Two expectations are developed in the following paragraphs:

1. Far right parties will draw on core concepts in their ideology to decontest Europe and integrate it in their ideology.
2. In a similar vein, they will rely on core concepts in their ideology to define their positions on the European Union as a concrete issue.

These expectations are not to be read as concrete hypotheses, but rather, as ‘educated provisional inferences that will be considered and explored’ (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012: 53). These ‘provisional inferences’ also serve the more functional role of guiding the reader through the empirical chapters; ideally, they will allow her to judge the analytical conclusions and interpretations of the author as well.

Starting from the premise that ideologies are distinctive configurations of political concepts to which determinate meanings are assigned through processes of mutual decontestation, the first objective of this thesis is to ascertain how ‘Europe’ has been decontested in far right ideology.<sup>6</sup> It is helpful to start by making an educated guess about the type of concept that Europe is within far right ideology. It is probably not a stretch to define Europe, at least initially, as a perimeter concept for the far right. Perimeter concepts, as noted in the previous section, are a type of peripheral concept that ‘straddle the interface between the conceptualisation of social realities and the external contexts and concrete manifestations in and through which these conceptualisations occur’ (Freedden 1998a: 79). Their peculiarity is that they allow for ideologies to accommodate and influence current events, thus remaining relevant in the social world. Europe would appear to pertain to this area, on the one hand, due to the broad post-war reflections on the place of Europe in the world, and on the other hand, because of the presence of the European Economic Community and then European Union as a real-life policy issue that needed to be addressed. Following this perspective, Europe embeds ideology in a given historical and political context, giving the far right’s ideology as a whole a more grounded character.

The view of Europe as a perimeter concept is relevant to understanding how it is decontested. In fact, it was argued earlier that it is usually possible to trace a path from core to adjacent to peripheral concepts, through an analysis of processes of logical and cultural adjacency that lead from one to the other. In order to answer our question on the definition of Europe, then, we will have to turn to this path and understand how, from the core and via the area of adjacency, one arrives at the perimeter – and, of course, if over

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<sup>6</sup> Note that while decontestation is a process that flows both from centre to periphery and from periphery to centre, implying that the incorporation of a new issue is likely to shape the way in which old ones are defined, the primary focus here is on the centre-periphery dynamic. However, the thesis will also consider how decontesting Europe in a certain way shaped the way in which other concepts were understood.

time that perimeter moves. While it will be for the empirical part to determine that path, it is at least possible to suggest what one might find on the way to decontestation.

The first expectation of this thesis is that the decontestation of Europe will likely make reference to concepts and ideas situated in the ideological core of the far right: namely, concepts falling under the domain of nationalism. In fact, if scholars have disagreed in the past on how to define the far right and its ideology (see Mudde 1996, 2000 for early reviews and Carter 2018 for a more recent assessment), a broad consensus exists that the minimum definition of a far right party needs to include nationalism as a core trait and ‘focal point’ (Minkenberg 2017: 14) of their ideology (e.g., Bar-On 2018, Davies 1999, Harrison and Bruter 2011, Mudde 2007).

While nationalism is as debated a concept as that of ‘far right’ (for examples on how to define nationalism and whether it qualifies as an ideology see Adams 1993: 82ff, Ball and Dagger 2014: 13-14, Finlayson 1998, Freeden 1998b, Griffin 1999), definitions will usually encompass two aspects: first, they will identify the nation as the referent actor, and second, they will express the need for this group’s identity to be expressed politically and/or institutionally. Thus, for example, Ernest Gellner, a pioneering scholar in the field, famously defined nationalism as a political principle ‘which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent’ (1983: 1). Anthony D. Smith, for his part, described it as ‘an ideological movement to attain and maintain autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population, some of whose members conceive it to constitute an actual or potential “nation”’ (1999: 256). From the morphological perspective, Michael Freeden, while expressing some scepticism as to nationalism’s status as an ideology, defined its core as composed of five elements:

First, the prioritisation of a particular group – the nation – as a key constituting and identifying framework for human beings and their practices. The realised condition in which this occurs is called nationhood. Second, a positive valorisation is assigned to one’s own nation, granting it specific claims over the conduct of its members. Third, the desire to give politico-institutional expression to the first two core concepts. Fourth, space and time are considered to be crucial determinants of social identity. Fifth, a sense of belonging and membership in which sentiment and emotion play an important role. (1998b: 751-752)

In studies of the far right, far right nationalism has been further specified as being a specific type of exclusionary nationalism (Minkenberg 2003: 151, Eatwell 2000: 412-

413) or, as Mudde puts it, a form of nativism that combines xenophobia and nationalism to present an ‘ideology that holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group (“the nation”), and that non-native people and ideas are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state’ (2007: 19). This nativism has at times been framed in racial terms, but in political parties in Europe it is now mostly present in an ‘ethno-pluralist’ version which strips the insider/outsider divide of its hierarchical character, while maintaining the idea that cultures are fundamentally different and incompatible (Rydgren 2007: 244; although see Mondon and Winter 2017 for a more critical perspective). Beyond the concept of nation and its logical corollary of (closed) community as defining characteristics of nationalism, the definitions also point towards ideas of autonomy and self-realisation, political representation, belonging and emotional attachment. While these are only some definitions in a vast literature, they provide us with some clues in terms of the concepts we might expect the parties to rely on in their definition of Europe (although it is very possible that they may not all be present or relevant within this study).<sup>7</sup>

In addition, although nationalism forms the core of the far right’s ideology and is likely to be the most relevant element in the study given Europe’s nature as a transnational phenomenon, other elements are often brought forward as defining the far right’s system of beliefs. For example, the ideological feature of authoritarianism occupies a prominent place in definitions of the far right (Hainsworth 2008, Harrison and Bruter 2011, Ignazi 2002, Inglehart and Norris 2019, Mudde 2007), and many recent definitions also include populism among the key features of a specific set of the far right (Herman and Muldoon 2019, Mudde 2007, Rydgren 2018: 5-6, Skenderovic 2009). One may also include a dubious commitment to the existing political system as a defining characteristic of the far right, thus including ‘anti-establishment’ and ‘anti-democracy’ as ideological features to note, although the latter will typically only apply to the so-called ‘extreme right’ (see Hainsworth 2008: 8-9 on the distinction between radical and extreme). Thus, other concepts which may appear as relevant are: the primacy of the state, the importance of order, an attachment to traditional values, the defence of the ‘true’ people against a

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<sup>7</sup> Note that, just as in the expectations of this thesis, the definitions provided here are meant to be ‘educated provisional inferences’. In keeping with the exploratory and inductive nature of the research, this thesis deliberately avoids adopting a formal definition of far right ideology. While definitions brought forward by others are here discussed with the objective of setting out some expectations, they are not considered as ‘definitive’, but rather as tentative and subject to adaptation and further exploration based on the empirical findings.

corrupt elite, the view of politics as expressing the will of the people thus defined, and even opposition to democratic rule as a whole. While some of these may prove to be adjacent concepts, or relevant only to certain far right parties, they nonetheless provide us with some expectations about concepts that go beyond nationalism and which may appear in the far right's definition of Europe.

The second expectation of this thesis is that similar concepts will also play a role in informing concrete policy positions on the European Union. This is a reflection of the thesis' consideration that ideology is composed of two elements: a worldview and a programme for action informed by it. Intrinsic to this idea is the presence, within ideology, of some conception of 'the Good Society' (Sainsbury 1980: 10), which the programme for action is meant to lead towards. Thus, it is expected that the way in which the concepts—as part of the worldview—are decontested and interact will inform an evaluation of the EU based on how well it conforms to the far right's distinctive view.

To conclude, we may summarise the two main propositions of this section as follows: first, the far right will draw on central concepts in their ideology to define the meaning of Europe and place it in their ideological schemata; second, they will perform a similar operation in defining their positions on the European Union as a concrete political issue. The empirical sections will explore these propositions in more depth and specify, adapt, add flesh to or even overturn them in the light of the analysis.

Although these two propositions will be central to the analysis, the empirical sections are also likely to yield observations that go beyond them and which the reader may find of interest. The diachronic and comparative nature of the analysis which is discussed below, for example, is likely to offer interesting insights into the evolution of the idea of Europe, as well as on the different ways in which it has been approached by different far right parties. It can highlight their potentially varying concerns, their approaches to similar questions and the range of answers they have provided. It can also provide an overview of the effects on ideology of decontesting Europe in a certain way, thus offering an insight into the periphery-centre path of decontestation. Finally, beyond the field of far right studies, it can provide a view of 'a certain idea of Europe' that readers focusing on the intellectual history of 'Europe' (e.g., den Boer et al. 1995, Malmberg and Strath 2002, Pagden 2002) might find worthy of attention. The following section turns to elucidating the way in which this will be done.

## THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Having identified the research questions, conceptual approach and set some expectations, it is now possible to bring these together into a research design that can remain committed to the theoretical underpinnings sketched out earlier and provide some answers to the research questions at hand. The following sections present the main features of the empirical strategy adopted by the thesis.

The thesis' interest in exploring questions of meaning led the researcher to opt for an interpretive approach supported by the use of qualitative methods. At the heart of interpretive research, in fact, is a concern with meaning-making (Schrag Sternberg 2013: 8, Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012: 46, Yanow and Schwartz Shea 2006: xii), requiring the researcher to focus on 'meanings, beliefs, and discourses, as opposed to laws and rules, correlations between social categories, or deductive models' (Bevir and Rhodes 2006: 70) and interpret the actions of the studied subject 'in terms of actors' understandings of their own contexts' (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012: 52). While interpretive works are in a minority in the field of political science, their focus on 'meaning-making' gives them a comparative advantage in studies centred on understanding how actors 'make sense' of the world and how this informs their actions (Bevir and Rhodes 2006: 73, Schwartz Shea and Yanow 2012: 52). The use of qualitative rather than quantitative methods followed logically this commitment to an interpretive stance. While scholars of ideology have used both quantitative and qualitative methods, the latter are arguably more appropriate in the context of an approach where meaning, contextuality and 'thick description' take centre stage (Bevir and Rhodes 2015: 18-19, Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012: 48ff).

The far right's ideology of Europe was studied through two case studies: the Movimento Sociale Italiano/Alleanza Nazionale in Italy, and the Front National in France. The choice to focus on a small number of cases was dictated by the author's desire to fully exploit the interpretive framework's potential to provide in-depth and nuanced understandings of social phenomena that can add to existing theories and help build new ones (Nowell and Albrecht 2018). Given the time-consuming nature of interpretive research, examining a larger number of cases would have risked diluting this approach's power. Case studies are also notably better suited for exploratory and theory building research (Gerring 2004) than other qualitative and quantitative methods, and help identify



trends and patterns which can then be tested in a larger set of cases. While the focus on a small number of cases entails costs in terms of generalisability,<sup>8</sup> these are offset by the depth of knowledge which is central to understanding processes of meaning-making.

The Movimento Sociale Italiano was the ‘grandfather’ of post-war European far right parties. Founded in 1946 from the ashes of the Italian Fascist party, it was for a long time the only successful far right party in Europe. While the MSI never reached particularly high peaks in terms of vote share (its best electoral score was little under 9% of the popular vote in the 1972 general election, but in general they hovered around the 5-6% mark), it was a constant presence in the Italian and European parliaments.

In the context of Italy’s ‘polarised pluralism’ (Sartori 2005: 116ff), the MSI occupied the far right pole of a political system dominated by the Christian Democrats in the centre and the Italian Communist Party on the far left. Originally opposed to Italy’s post-war liberal-democratic settlement, especially in its early years, the MSI oscillated between, on the one hand, pursuing a policy of *inserimento* (insertion) and moderation, and on the other hand pushing for outright opposition to the political system as a whole (Newell 2000: 469-470). The question of which strategy to pursue was a source of tension between the party’s internal factions, with the right-wing authoritarian faction pushing for mainstreaming, and the more left-wing revolutionary groups aiming for further radicalisation (on the MSI’s factions, see Ignazi 1989, 1998, and Tarchi 1997). In spite of its attempts to become an accepted player in the political system, the MSI was, for a large part of its history, a pariah party. It was kept away from the circles of power and, having failed to insert itself into the political system in its early years, it embraced its anti-system role in later years.

The 1990s presented the MSI with an environment that was conducive to making the transition from an anti-system party to a mainstream party. Three factors explain why this became possible: the *Tangentopoli* (Bribesville) scandal, evolving voter preferences, and changes to the electoral law (Newell 2000: 475). Tangentopoli revealed the extent of corruption within the political system and, coupled with the decline of traditional party loyalties, led to a collapse of the Italian post-war party system. Furthermore, a change to the electoral law pushed for the formation of coalitions (Renwick, Hanretty et al. 2009)

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<sup>8</sup> The notion of ‘generalisability’ is also rarely considered as an appropriate standard for qualitative and interpretive research (e.g., Guba and Lincoln 1984, Schwartz-Shea 2006).

and an overall restructuring of the political system on a Left/Right cleavage (Fella 2006: 13-14, Ignazi 2005: 334).

These changes provided the MSI's reform-oriented party leader Gianfranco Fini with ammunition to advocate for a fundamental rebranding of the party, with the objective of bringing it into power. Largely untouched by the Tangentopoli scandal, between 1994 and 1995, the MSI underwent a transformation from a 'neo-fascist' party to the 'post-fascist' Alleanza Nazionale. Following the 1994 election, in which it won 13.5% of the vote, it entered government in a short-lived coalition with Forza Italia and the Lega Nord (now simply the Lega). In 1995, at the Fiuggi Congress, the MSI formally changed its name to Alleanza Nazionale. While most of the party's personnel remained the same (with a few exceptions, such as Pino Rauti's radical faction which converged into the MSI-Fiamma Tricolore) and their core ideas were only moderately refashioned (Ignazi 2003, Tarchi 2003), Fiuggi represented the first step in a march towards normalisation. AN's mainstreaming continued in the following years as the party sought to develop a political culture independent of the MSI's heritage and an increasingly respectable face (Tarchi 2003: 177-178). Between 2001 and 2005, it also developed its experience in government by holding prestigious ministries (most notably, Fini held the positions of Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister). The process of mainstreaming culminated in 2009 with the merging of Alleanza Nazionale and Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia into a single party, the People of Freedom.

In the academic literature on the far right, the MSI is commonly considered as the 'archetype' of the 'old' neo-fascist far right (Ignazi 2003), and an early source of inspiration (especially in terms of organisation) for several of the parties that came after it. Alleanza Nazionale, on the other hand, is regarded as an interesting experiment in ideological transformation (Griffin 1996). It was the first far right party to be included in government (along with the Lega), even before the Fiuggi Congress that transformed it officially into a 'post-fascist' party. While the inclusion of the AN may raise some scepticism, as the literature highlights their successful transition from 'post-fascist' to 'something else' (Tarchi 2003), this paper decides to follow them through their 'post-fascist' transition because transitions are usually long and tortuous, and often some elements from the past remain (see for example Griffin 1996, Vasilopoulou 2011).

The French Front National, on the other hand, once again according to Ignazi's classification, represents the 'prototype' of the 'new' far right party, or, as others have

dubbed it, the ‘populist radical right’ party. While not the most electorally successful far right party in Europe, the Front National’s influence on other far right parties in Europe is well-documented, leading some to consider it as having provided the ‘master-frame’ for the parties that came after it (see Rydgren 2005, Van Hauwaert 2014).

The Front National was founded in 1972, with the objective of bringing together the various far right groups operating in France. It started off as a *fourre-tout* of extremist groups, including neo-fascists, traditionalist Catholics, *poujadistes*, monarchists, and Algerian war veterans (Camus 1989), kept together by the charismatic leadership of Jean-Marie Le Pen. During its first years, referred to within the party as the ‘crossing of the desert’ (Lecœur 2003: 29), it struggled to have electoral relevance and remain cohesive.

The Front National’s electoral breakthrough only came about in the 1980s, following a series of transformations within the French system. Unhappiness with the Socialist government, increasing concerns about immigration, and an ongoing economic crisis helped the Front National fashion itself as the champion of anti-immigration and security (Stockemer 2017: 13-14, Williams 2006: 82). This increased focus paid off and led the party to its first victories at the local level. Most notably, the 1982 cantonal elections in Dreux saw the party gain around 10% of the vote, and this was followed by a positive showing in the 1983 municipal elections. The Front National finally emerged as a successful party on a national level when it gained over 10% of the national vote in the 1984 European elections, and when in 1986 it secured 35 MPs in national elections. In 1986 in particular, the FN benefitted from Mitterrand’s choice to introduce a system of proportional representation (Betz and Immerfall 1998: 21). While the President’s main objective had been to limit the Socialist Party’s losses and split the right-wing vote between the FN and the Gaullist Rassemblement Pour la République, he also helped the FN become a permanent fixture in the French political system (Stockemer 2017: 17).

The 1980s were not only a period of electoral growth for the FN, but also one of organisational growth. Its electoral successes facilitated the establishment of a strong organisational structure, and it attracted new recruits at all levels (Rydgren 2004: 19). Among the new recruits were a number of experienced politicians and intellectuals such as Bruno Mégret, Jean-Yves Le Gallou and Yvan Blot, who sought to professionalise the party, consolidate its programme and grow its appeal (Gauthier 2009: 388). These evolutions helped the party sustain its growth in the long-term and contributed to its firm establishment in the French political system.

Following a decade of growth, the 1990s and 2000s were marked by ebbs and flows in the party's successes. On the one hand, the return to the two-round majoritarian system of voting and the continued ostracisation of the party on the part of other actors kept the FN out of power. Furthermore, in 1998, the party suffered the worst split in its history, when fundamental strategic disagreements and personal conflicts between Jean-Marie Le Pen and Bruno Mégret led to the expulsion of the latter from the FN (Dézé 2012: 125). Mégret did not leave alone but brought a sizeable chunk of the party's leadership (although not many of its voters) with him to his newly formed Mouvement National Républicain (MNR) (Stockemer 2017: 22). On the other hand, the FN's political programme remained appealing thanks to the dominance of issues such as globalisation, corruption and immigration (Stockemer 2017: 20). In 2002, only a few years after the split, the Front National achieved one of its most stunning feats when Jean-Marie Le Pen reached the second round of the French presidential election and secured around 18% of the vote in the final round (Goodliffe 2012: 1).

In 2011, Marine Le Pen replaced her father as leader of the party and embarked on a process of 'de-demonisation', aimed at making the Front National a more respectable and 'coalitionable' political actor (Ivaldi 2016, Shields 2013, Stockemer and Barisone 2016). Following a series of negative electoral results in the late 2000s, and aware of the need for ideological renewal, she reoriented the party's political agenda (Williams 2006: 95) while maintaining a strong continuity with the past (Alduy and Wahnich 2015). Even though the party still struggles to gain representation at the national level due to France's majoritarian electoral system, and is still shunned by most other political actors, it has grown exponentially in the last eight years since Marine Le Pen took over from her father. Most notably, Marine Le Pen won almost 34% of the vote in the second round of the 2017 presidential election and secured 8 MPs in the legislative elections that followed. In 2018, in a bid to grow its electoral appeal, the party changed its name to 'Rassemblement National' (National Rally, RN), but the change was mostly cosmetic, with little evolution in terms of ideas.

The logic of selection can be summarised as a 'diverse case study design' (Seawright and Gerring 2008). Diverse case study designs are defined as case studies whose primary goal is 'the achievement of maximum variance along relevant dimensions' (Seawright and Gerring 2008: 300) with either exploratory or confirmatory aims, depending on whether one is focusing on a single variable or on the relationship between

different variables. This type of design allows a wider range of variation, leading to a more comprehensive view of the type and content of claims advanced by far right parties on Europe.

Within this context, the selected parties present the clear advantage of holding different positions on Europe. In fact, while they both started off with broadly 'europositive' stances, the MSI never turned towards fully-fledged opposition to the European project and remained throughout its history, and after its transformation into Alleanza Nazionale (AN), broadly 'compromising' in its stance towards the EU, while the Front National quickly turned to a 'rejectionist' attitude especially following the introduction of the Maastricht Treaty (Vasilopoulou 2011, 2018a, Reungoat 2012: 100-102). In addition, since they represent two different 'types' of far right party (Ignazi 2003), and had a significant influence on the parties that came after them, it was hoped that they would capture two somewhat different strands of far right ideology (although the extent of their difference is subject to debate, e.g., Cole 2005, Mammone 2009: 177, Mudde 2000: 15, Taguieff 2014). This does not mean that the findings will be automatically generalisable, but when coupled with thick description, such an approach can facilitate the readers' judgement about their potential transferability to other settings (Bloomberg and Volpe 2008, Given 2008, Lincoln and Guba 1984).

There are also a number of more practical but no less important reasons to examine these parties in particular. First, their long political history made it possible to carry out the diachronic analysis that is so important to morphological studies. Second, both the MSI/AN and the FN have achieved respectable results in electoral terms and have managed to sustain them over time. This has given them the opportunity to construct a varied and accessible ideological corpus that could be studied in some depth, providing the reader with a more cogent and exhaustive analysis. Finally, there is an issue of language. When adopting a qualitative and interpretive approach to the analysis of ideology, it is essential to be able to fully capture not only what is being said, but also the shades of meaning in the language one is analysing. Thus, it was judged important for the researcher to be able to read documents in their original language, rather than in translation. While these considerations may seem trivial, they are nonetheless important in the framework of a PhD.

Admittedly, the MSI/AN and FN are only two far right parties among many that could have been studied, so it is also worth briefly mentioning why they were chosen over

other likely contenders. One might, in fact, wonder why in Italy the analysis focused on a ‘dinosaur’ such as the MSI instead of the more popular La Lega (League, Lega), or why the Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (Freedom Party, FPÖ) or the Vlaams Belang (Flemish Interest, VB) were not included in the analysis. These parties’ inclusion would have allowed this study to capture similar elements of diversity concerning positions on Europe, with the VB, Lega and FPÖ starting off as broadly europositive. The FPÖ and VB, furthermore, as far right parties with a long history, would have allowed to capture a similar time frame as the MSI and FN, but, unlike the MSI, are still alive and well.

While these observations are correct, what the parties mentioned above lacked was the ability to represent the different ‘strands’ of the far right. In particular, the FPÖ and VB, like the FN, are commonly classed as ‘new’ radical right parties. Furthermore, both were heavily influenced by the FN (Rydgren 2005, Van Hauwaert 2014), making it more interesting to study the original. The Lega, on the other hand, posed a different problem concerning its very belonging to the far right party family. While its recent developments under Matteo Salvini suggest that it has become a fully-fledged far right party, its regionalist origins mean that this definition has been contested in the past (Albertazzi et al. 2018, McDonnell 2006, Passarelli 2013), making it a disputable choice. Thus, while other parties could have credibly been studied, and may indeed be looked at by future researchers, the MSI/AN and FN appeared as the best suited for the study.

Before proceeding to a discussion of the analytical tools of the study, it is important to dispel one final reservation that might have arisen in the reader: the focus on political parties in a study of ideology. Criticism of this choice may take a variety of forms, but two of the main objections will be taken into account. The first one is a critique on grounds of origins. In this line of critique, the choice of parties would be considered misdirected, because parties do not produce ideology but merely ‘disseminate it’ and make it ‘readily consumable’ (Freeden 2003: 78-79). Thus, the scholar interested in ideology would be better served by studying the work of political philosophers, public intellectuals, or think tanks, rather than looking at ‘participant ideologists’ (Román-Zozaya 2008). While this is a valid concern, the role of parties as ‘disseminators’ is precisely what makes them interesting, as they represent the link between the world of ideas and that of day-to-day politics. Thus, they are likely to shape current debates to a higher degree and influence public understandings of Europe in a way that other actors may not be able to achieve.

The second critique proposes a more substantial challenge regarding the value of ideology in political parties and raises concerns about the value of ideas. This line of criticism stems from the branch of comparative politics that studies political parties and presents two distinct aspects, one pertaining to the relevance of party ideology, and the other concerning its validity. At the heart of both accounts is the view of the political party as a body involved, sometimes exclusively, in political competition over votes (e.g., Downs 1985 [1957]: 24-25, Epstein 1980: 9, Mair 1997: 21). In the most extreme version of the account, the party is an actor whose sole purpose is to maximise votes (Downs 1985 [1957]) or gain political office (Riker 1962). In this perspective, ideology as a system of beliefs falls quickly into irrelevance, as it is, at best, nothing but a disguise for the real motives of the party. There are at least three possible answers to this claim (beyond it being not empirically substantiated – see Strom 1990: 568 for a review). The first one is to claim that vote seeking is a form of ideology or at least guided by certain beliefs about what is ‘strategic’ – meaning that even in the case of a purely strategic party, one would be dealing with some kind of ideology. The second and more relevant point in this case is that even if we accept that parties are purely strategic actors, it does not follow that they are free from the burden of justifying their actions in front of voters. Justification will rarely resort to an appeal to winning votes but will usually involve some reference to principles, and, as Quentin Skinner so eloquently put it, once an agent has professed an attachment to certain motives ‘even if the agent is not in fact motivated by any of the principles he professes, he will nevertheless be obliged to behave in such a way that his actions remain compatible with the claim that these principles genuinely motivated them’ (Skinner 1974: 299; see also Flood and Soborski 2018: 38 for a similar point). The third answer is that seeing parties as being motivated merely by winning office or votes offers a heavily distorted vision of the party which covers only one of its facets. Without wanting to review the meaning of the term ‘party’ (although see White and Ypi 2016: 10ff and White 2006 for an account), most definitions seem to acknowledge at least that parties are not only electoral machines, but also groups united by interests, purposes, common projects and a shared view of the world: in other words, what has been so far defined as an ideology. While not all parties will have an equally developed ideology, it is at least reasonable to expect them to express some worldview and a programme for action based on it. As a result, the accusation of irrelevance needs to be rejected.

The second line of critique is more relevant and pertains to the validity of claims brought forward by parties as being the reflection of ‘ideology’. In particular, without necessarily seeing parties exclusively as electoral machines, it will raise the issue that what parties say is often said in the context of electoral competition, where underlying ideological commitments will mix with more contingent measures (Mair and Mudde 1998: 219). The risk, then, is that one may be either unable to tell one from the other, or that party ideology may bear little relation to the policies being proposed (Mair 1997: 24). While this critique needs to be taken seriously, it can also be managed through a careful selection of sources. In particular, it invites the scholar to avoid focusing exclusively on electoral material in the study of ideology, and it requires her to put less focus on analysis of individual statements and more on regular patterns emerging over a variety of documents.

With this in mind, the thesis sought to capture party ideology drawing on a variety of internally and externally directed partisan documents collected through online, library and archival research. Instead of focusing exclusively on party manifestoes as the ‘official’ expression of party ideology (Borg 1966: 97), it delved deeper into party literature, drawing in particular on party papers, newspapers, magazines and books published by party elites, considering that this could produce a more accurate view of party ideology and that it would also allow for a measure of triangulation (for similar approaches, see also Ignazi 1989, Mudde 2000, Flood and Soborski 2018). The starting year for data collection was set as 1978, the year before the first European Parliament election, so as to allow for the long timeframe required for morphological analyses. The end point for the MSI/AN is 2009, when the party was merged into the *Popolo della Libertà*; for the Front National, the analysis stops at the French Presidential election of 2017, the last major election to take place in the course of this research.

While the analysis could have credibly started earlier, typically at the time of the foundation of the parties (1946 for the MSI and 1972 for the FN), 1978 was considered as a better starting point. First, it is at this time that one would have expected European issues to start featuring more prominently in the parties’ ideology. Second, this timeline allowed the researcher to equalise the starting date of the analysis. For the Front National, this was also due to practical data limitations: the archival sources covering the 1972-1978 period were not accessible at the time in which the fieldwork was completed. While



the timeline of data collection is relatively limited, where relevant, the thesis also considers documents produced before this time.

Starting in 1978, rather than a later date, on the other hand, had the advantage of making it possible to capture evolutions in the process of European integration itself and reflect the EU's changing nature through the decades. In fact, throughout the studied period, the European Union evolved geographically and politically from a small and primarily economic union to a large supranational political organisation (for a history of European integration, see Dinan 2010, Gilbert 2012). Geographically, through successive enlargements, it expanded from a restricted group of six, and then nine, Western-European countries between the 1950s and 1970s, to a union of twenty-eight member states covering most of the European continent in the 2010s. Politically, the limited economic collaboration of the early European Economic Community transformed into an openly political project with the creation of the European Union. In fact, following the initial impetus of the 1950s and a period of stagnation in the 1970s, the 1980s and 1990s saw a series of evolutions which marked a qualitative shift in the process of European integration. Between the 1980s and the 2000s, the EU acquired its own flag, anthem, currency, and (unsuccessfully) tried to introduce a Constitution. The Single European Act, and the Maastricht, Amsterdam, Nice and Lisbon Treaties all pushed the EU into an increasingly supranational mode of decision-making (notably, through the shift from unanimity to qualified majority voting in the Council and the increased use of co-decision in legislative decision-making – e.g. Tsebelis and Garrett 2000: 12-13, Héritier et al. 2015), making it more powerful and visible in domestic and international politics, and, importantly, more contested (Hooghe and Marks 2009, Schmitter 2009: 211-212). These dynamics have also been strengthened in recent years by the responses to the Eurocrisis and the migration crisis, which further enhanced the EU's influence on national contexts, as well as its contestation (e.g. van Middelaar 2019). Adopting a wide timeframe therefore made it possible to capture and acknowledge how these evolutions in the process of European integration affected the parties' understanding of the project.

The full corpus of source materials studied in the thesis consisted of 397 documents, 175 for the MSI/AN (divided as follows: 93 MSI, 82 AN) and 222 documents for the FN.<sup>9</sup> The documents for analysis were selected based on two criteria: they either

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<sup>9</sup> More information on corpus creation is available in Appendix A.

had to be particularly significant to the life of the party (examples include manifestoes and congress documents); and/or, they had to explicitly mention Europe (whether as the EU or as the continent and civilisation associated with it), and not be of a purely factual nature (such as reports on votes in the European Parliament in which no evaluative judgement is expressed, accounts of laws passed by the EU, etc.). For the MSI and AN, the researcher collected party programmes for European and national elections published between 1978 and 2008, internal congress documents, interview books and a number of newspaper articles and interviews focusing on European issues. Documents were retrieved mainly from the archives of the Fondazione Ugo Spirito – Renzo de Felice, from the pages of the party newspaper *‘Il Secolo d’Italia’* and from the archives of the Manifesto Project (<https://manifesto-project.wzb.eu/>) and of the European Election Studies Euromanifesto project (<http://europeanelectionstudies.net/>). For the Front National, the researcher collected party programmes for European and national elections presented between 1979 and 2017, books, magazine articles, interviews, speeches and press releases dealing with European issues. Documents were retrieved mainly from the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, where the researcher gained access to party magazines (specifically, *‘La Lettre de Jean-Marie Le Pen/Français D’Abord!’* and *‘Le National’*) and speeches via the internet archives available on site. Manifestoes were mostly available online or in book form at the LSE and Sciences Po Paris libraries. European Parliament election manifestoes were kindly provided by the European Election Studies project.

In order to reconstruct the conceptual space of Europe and answer the first and second research questions on the place and meaning of Europe in far right ideology, as well as how this translates into concrete policy, the research worked through a two-step procedure. At first, the corpus was analysed through a procedure referred to as ‘concept coding’. In qualitative analysis, a code is ‘a word or a short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data’ (Saldaña 2016: 4). Coding refers to the process of assigning codes to evidence collected by the researcher, with the aim of using such codes for purposes such as ‘pattern detection, categorisation, assertion or proposition development, theory building, and other analytical processes’ (Saldaña 2016: 5). Among the various coding techniques available to the researcher, concept coding appeared a helpful method to abstract from specific utterances about Europe the more general

conceptual categories required of morphological analysis. In concept coding, in fact, the researcher focuses on the general ideas behind the data, rather than on behaviours or on specific objects (Saldaña 2016: 119-220). Concept coding was used here to identify the main concepts discussed by parties in relation to Europe. While often in conceptual analysis there is a tendency to equate concepts with the words expressing them, in this case concepts were approached as ‘realms of meaning’ formed by associated notions which, while not having the same name as the general concept, are used as synonyms of it or express similar ideas.

In this round, all documents were read, summarised and assigned keywords defining the individual concepts used by the parties in conjunction with Europe. The driving principle was to understand the individual components of the concept of Europe, as well as the relationship between Europe and other concepts. This initial phase yielded four main concepts (Identity, Liberty, Threat, National Interest), each subdivided into sub-themes representing the different facets of the concepts. Table 1 provides a summary of the concepts, sub-themes and some examples of coded text.<sup>10</sup> These concepts were set in conversation with the literature, with the objective of ensuring their credibility. Based on the view widely expressed in the literature and discussed above of far right parties as primarily nationalist parties, the concepts appeared sufficiently plausible.

While the first round of analysis was aimed primarily at identifying the conceptual space of Europe, the second round of analysis was more concerned with analysing the meanings of the individual concepts, their relationships and their evolution over time. In this round, the researcher recoded and analysed only a smaller purposive sample of 112 documents<sup>11</sup> with the objective of identifying key passages of text that could be used to trace the ‘micro’ level of the ideologies, and to move from the skeletal reconstruction of the ideological space to the analysis of its meanings.<sup>12</sup> The selected documents were those which articulated the parties’ positions most clearly, thus providing the researcher and reader alike with a stronger analytical perspective and exemplary excerpts. The researcher

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<sup>10</sup> Note that, while the concepts of Identity, Liberty and Threat are presented through themes capturing their meaning, the National Interest is structured around the three ‘stages’ of European integration as defined in literature on Euroscepticism (e.g., Vasilopoulou 2011, Kopecky and Mudde 2002): the principle of European collaboration, its current practice, and its future .

<sup>11</sup> Complete list available in Appendix B

<sup>12</sup> The researcher considered that, given the high ideological intensity observed in the studied parties (both by the author and by previous researchers; e.g., Dézé 2008), a smaller sample would still guarantee some level of saturation while avoiding ‘informational redundancy’ (Francis et al. 2010; Guest et al. 2006).

TABLE 1: OVERVIEW OF CONCEPTS

Main concept	Subthemes	Description	Examples
<b>Identity</b>	Europe as common civilisation	Analyses definition of 'Europe' as a community of belonging with constitutive norms and practices by focusing on how Europe and Europeans are described	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Europe is a historic, geographic, cultural, economic and social ensemble. It is an entity destined for action' (FN 1985)</li> </ul>
	Europe as bounded community	Analyses view of Europe as a spatial and relational category by focusing on definitions of its geographic and symbolic boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Now that Europe has recovered those cultures and nations from which it had been separated [...], the European mission realises a historic objective' (AN 2004)</li> </ul>
	National and European identities	Analyses relationship between national belonging and belonging to a broader European community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'One can be French and proud to be European, descending from the most formidable of civilisations' (FN 1991)</li> </ul>

Main concept	Subthemes	Description	Examples
<b>Liberty</b>	Autonomy and self-rule	Analyses relationship between Europe and ideas of freedom from external constraint and freedom to make one owns' laws at the national and European level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'More than ever it is time for France to free itself of the diktats of the European Union which have led us to an impasse' (FN 2015)</li> </ul>
	External power and rayonnement	Analyses relationship between Europe and ideas of freedom to project power and influence in the external realm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'We have to push her [Europe] to rediscover the sense of its autonomous personality [...] to aim for the first place in the world' (MSI 1987)</li> </ul>

Main concept	Subthemes	Description	Examples
<b>Threat</b>	External threats	Analyses people, countries and phenomena which are defined as presenting an immediate danger to Europe and its nations from the outside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'We must [...] document our opposition to the 'civilisation of Coca-Cola' coming from the USA, which disaggregates the spirit and the soul of our popular and national traditions' (MSI 1979a)</li> </ul>
	Internal threats	Analyses people and phenomena which are defined as presenting an immediate danger to Europe and its nations from the inside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• '[...] individual crises, and that of Europe as a whole, are a crisis of unity, of political integration. An outburst of bad and poorly digested nationalism [...]' (Romualdi 1981)</li> </ul>
	Diffuse threats	Analyses people and phenomena which are not clearly identifiable as internal or external in nature and who are defined as presenting an immediate danger to Europe and its nations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'The Europe of Brussels [...] marches, slyly, towards Eurofederalism, a simple stepping stone towards Globalism, that is, to be clear, World Government by the United States' (FN 1999)</li> </ul>

Main concept	Subthemes	Description	Examples
<b>National interest</b>	Principle of European Collaboration	Analyses statements concerning the reasons, means and goals of collaboration at the European level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'The nations of Europe have common interests and are subject to shared dangers. Hence they must be able to ensure together their defence' (FN 1993)</li> </ul>
	Practice of European Integration	Analyses judgements assessing how EU performs both in terms of ensuring goals of European collaboration are met and in general	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Neither can we accept the passivity with which the Community adapts itself to a secondary role in the world' (MSI 1987d)</li> </ul>
	Future of European Integration	Analyses views on how an ideal European community would look like and what principles it would respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'What we hope for is that Europe is [...] a Confederation of different and sovereign States [...]' (AN 1994b)</li> </ul>

selected at least one document per year, but some years it was deemed necessary to include more than one document. This happened particularly around crucial events such as the first EP election in 1979 (especially for the MSI), and the Maastricht and European Constitution referendum years for the FN. In order to facilitate the retrieval of key illustrative sentences, the researcher employed NVivo as a tool to store and organise the data. It is mostly through the thick description of the documents studied in this second round of analysis that the narrative of the empirical chapters is developed. The remainder of the thesis presents the results of the analysis and is organised as follows. Chapters three, four, and five address the first research question, identifying the conceptual space of Europe. Each chapter addresses one concept that is key to the definition of Europe: Identity, Liberty, and Threat. Identity and Liberty, it is argued, are two concepts close to the core of the far right's brand of nationalism and serve to define the meaning of Europe. Threat, on the other hand, is an adjacent concept that further characterises the core and presents the link between the core and the concrete policy orientations of the parties. Chapter six addresses the second question, illustrating how the concepts identified in the previous chapters along with a fourth concept of National Interest inform the parties' positions on European integration. Chapter seven concludes the thesis, discussing the findings' implications and identifying areas for future research.

### 3. EUROPA PATRIA NOSTRA: EUROPE AS IDENTITY

How has Europe acquired meaning in far right ideology? This chapter advances two arguments: first, in line with the expectation that parties would draw upon key elements in their ideology to decontest Europe, it holds that the MSI/AN and FN have drawn upon the concept of Identity to define the meaning of Europe. Second, it suggests that by employing this concept, they have ‘opened’ their ideology to incorporate a transnational element.

The following sections develop these points by demonstrating how the concept of Identity is mobilised in the MSI/AN and FN’s discussions of Europe.<sup>13</sup> The chapter opens with a discussion of the relationship between nationalism and Identity, explaining why the latter may be considered a core concept in far right ideology. The empirical section of the chapter illustrates how the studied parties have employed the concept of Identity in their definition of Europe. It shows how the MSI/AN and FN have established the existence of Europe as a distinct and unique civilisation with defined symbolic and geographic boundaries – in other words, an ‘Us’ that is distinct from ‘Others’. It then highlights how membership of this community has carried a broadly positive value, although this has come at times to clash with the reality of the EU, considered, in many cases, as a limit to a positive understanding of Europe. The concluding section focuses on how the inclusion of Europe via the concept of Identity affects the shape of the parties’ ideologies, arguing that it ‘opens’ their ideology by adding a layer of belonging that goes beyond the national one.

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<sup>13</sup> Both explicit references to the term Identity but also to its component parts as identified in the opening section of the chapter are taken into account here. Note, in fact, that the modern use of the term identity as a category of belonging is rather recent, and that while this represented the fulcrum of FN discourse, it did not appear in this meaning in the discourse of the MSI until the late 1980s. In fact, when used in early documents of the MSI, the word ‘identity’ is taken to mean ‘sameness’. However, ideas of in-group and out-group that are commonly associated with the term appear in the discourse of the MSI, leading the researcher to use the term.

## MOBILISING THE CORE: FROM IDENTITY TO EUROPE

Nationalism, Chapter two argued, is often identified as a core ideological feature of far right parties. The chapter also suggested that, as an ideology, nationalism is concerned with the creation, definition and demand for political recognition of bounded communities called ‘nations’, or, as Smith put it, ‘attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity for a population which some of its members deem to constitute an actual or potential “nation”’ (Smith 2010: 9). Nationalism, then, entails first, the definition of a group (what will be here referred to as a ‘boundary-building’ element), and, second, some claim to political power, agency, or as a bare minimum, self-expression and recognition for that group (which will be here called a ‘political’ element).<sup>14</sup>

This chapter illustrates how, consistent with the idea that parties will draw on existing elements of their ideology to incorporate new issues, the MSI/AN and FN redeploy the ‘boundary-building’ elements of nationalism within a new framework and employ the concept of Identity to define what Europe is and who belongs to it. Furthermore, their understanding of Europe through the prism of Identity is developed in such a way that their definition of Europe closely mirrors their definition of the nation.

Identity, as Tajfel succinctly put it, is ‘that part of the individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group(s) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership’ (1978: 63). It can be seen as comprising of two elements: first of all, the identification of a certain group, or community, and, second, a sense of belonging to said group. Social identities and divisions between ‘Us’ versus ‘Them’ are a common way of thinking about the world (Cramer 2016); however, the centrality of the concept, as well as the components that make for a certain identity, will vary across groups. In this sense, while the language of identity will be shared, how that identity is construed and how much it matters will vary.

Identity is a particularly central notion in the case of far right parties whose ideology is defined by the identification of a specific national community, different from

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<sup>14</sup> Note that the distinction between a ‘boundary-building’ and a ‘political’ aspect of nationalism is not the same as the familiar ‘civic’ versus ‘ethnic’ distinction (for the original distinction, see Kohn 2005 [1944]; for a nuanced take on this debate, see Brubaker 1999). What the civic/ethnic distinction captures is the way in which boundaries and national communities are defined. The ‘boundary-building’ and ‘political’ distinction adopted here, on the other hand, seeks to capture what nationalism does, rather than how it does it. In this sense, the civic/ethnic division is a specification of how nationalism builds boundaries, but does not capture what the boundaries are being created for.

others and to which belonging has an emotional value attached (Freeden 1998b: 751-752). For the MSI/AN, this national community is conceived of as an ethno-cultural 'spiritual community', whose existence is not limited to the material world but also grounded in a common destiny and a historical continuity of traditions (Tarchi 2003: 146). In a similar vein, the FN conceives of France as a millenary civilisation, a territorially rooted community brought together by a common history, culture and, less explicitly, a shared ethnic lineage (although see Davies 1999: 80-83 on the FN's ambiguous positions on 'civic' versus 'ethnic' nationalism). For both parties, these national communities represent the primary form of identification, trumping all other belongings. The concept of Identity, then, serves to define the characteristics of the nation, who belongs to it and who should be excluded, and the value attached to being a part of the national community.

The identification of a distinct community and a reflection on the value attached to belonging to it come into play in both the MSI/AN's and FN's definition of Europe. The former feature does so when the parties identify a series of characteristics that are distinctive to Europe and the Europeans, and when they explicitly define where the boundaries of that community lie. Their definition of Europe closely mirrors their conception of the nation as an organic and spiritual community, brought together by a shared history and culture, thus showing how core elements of their ideology are redeployed in the definition of Europe. The latter feature manifests itself in their expressions of an attachment to the European community that is complementary to the national one because they are rooted in the same tradition. The following sections illustrate empirically how these elements of the concept of Identity have been 'repurposed' by the parties to define Europe.

## DEFINING THE COMMUNITY: WHAT IS EUROPE?

Identity requires the identification of a specific group that one belongs to. While within the context of nationalism, the primary group of belonging – the 'terminal community' in Deutsch's words (1966) – is the nation, this does not mean that other communities cannot be recognised. The following section illustrates how this first element of the concept of Identity has come into play in the parties' definition of Europe. It shows that the parties studied here have all recognised the existence of a specific European group and have defined it as an 'us' of some kind, a collective with 'constitutive norms' that define its



‘boundaries and distinctive practices’ (Abdelal et al. 2006: 697). Europe, they have claimed, represents a distinct civilization, characterised by a common history and heritage that Europeans have expressed through the centuries. They have, however, adopted somewhat differing definitions of this shared identity, as well as different views concerning its implications.

## ROOTED IN THE PAST, TURNED TOWARDS THE FUTURE: THE MSI’S EUROPEAN COMMUNITY OF BELONGING

The MSI’s view of Europe as a distinct community was built around two tenets: the acknowledgement of a shared past, and the hope for a shared future. Europe, in their view, was both a distinct and unique civilization rooted in the past, but also, a project of unity which building on this past, would lead Europe towards a common future.

To understand how this view has been expressed, and where its origins lie, it is helpful to briefly abandon the timeline of this study and take a step back to the 1950s and the writings of Filippo Anfuso. Anfuso was a diplomat in Mussolini’s Italy and represented the Italian Social Republic in Berlin. Upon his return in Italy in 1950, he joined the MSI and was elected to the lower chamber. The reason he is essential to the discussion of Europe in the MSI is that several of the MSI’s positions on Europe constitute developments of the notion of Europe that Anfuso sketched out in the publication *Europa Nazione*, a short lived party magazine established in 1951 whose aim was to bring together the works and reflections of European authors on how to build a ‘Nation Europe’ (see also Mammone 2015: 84-85).

The first number of *Europa Nazione* is in itself an interesting document. The list of contributors reads as a ‘who’s who’ of European fascism: authors included Giovanni Gentile, Maurice Bardèche and Julius Evola. In the foreword, Anfuso presented his own view of Europe, claiming that to him ‘Nation Europe’ ‘means a free and united Europe’ and ‘a bigger Nation’ that the smaller individual nations will be a part of (Anfuso 1951: 6-7). In this simple sentence, Anfuso expresses what will be the guiding principles of the MSI’s vision of Europe: first of all, the idea of a community of smaller individual nations united under the banner of a larger, European nation. The idea of nation employed here to discuss Europe implies the presence of a shared heritage that guides them towards unity. Secondly, underlying the sentence is the idea of Europe as a project, suggesting

that while communities need a starting point, they are also built in the future. Finally, Europe needs to be ‘free’, a central part of the party’s ideology of Europe and which will be discussed in depth in Chapter four.

While recognising the distinctiveness of Europe by comparing it to a potential nation, Anfuso remained remarkably silent on the defining features of this community.<sup>15</sup> This vagueness concerning what makes Europeans unique remains present in later MSI documents. In fact, it may be noted that the MSI, while claiming some form of European identity, puts little effort into defining the nature of Europe. This can be observed, for example, in the following passage from the 1980’s pamphlet *‘Il MSI dalla A alla Z’* (‘The MSI, from A to Z’). The pamphlet discusses and comments on the principles of the MSI’s doctrine most frequently ‘used to interpret the various aspects of reality and inform its [the party’s] praxis’ (MSI 1980: 9), and includes an entry on ‘Europeanism’, defined as

the ancient and always alive aspiration towards European unity, in the conscience of a community of interests and destinies, of history, of civilisation, of tradition among Europeans. The MSI-DN conceives of its Europeanism in this wider spiritual and moral sense, in addition to the material one; a Europeanism that is not opposed to the concept of the West, but distinct with respects to it and connected to it. (MSI 1980: 25)

Beyond the recognition of a European ‘community of interests and destinies’, coupled with vagueness concerning the contents of European identity (although, and this will be developed in the following sections of this thesis, it at least adds a point of specificity by saying that ‘Europe’ is not the same as ‘the West’), three further elements should catch the eye of the reader in this passage. First of all, the mere presence of ‘Europeanism’ in the booklet should highlight the importance of Europe as a concept for the MSI. Second of all, a further element of the MSI’s ideology is brought into the definition of Europe. In particular, this Europeanism, fitting with the MSI’s broader conception of existence and well in line with the spiritual conception of life advocated by Mussolini’s Fascist doctrine, sees Europe not only as a geographical or economic entity but also as a spiritual body, a view which is further reinforced by discussions in other documents of World War Two as the last of the European ‘civil wars’ (MSI 1979d). Finally, the attentive reader will

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<sup>15</sup> Others in the MSI’s early years were less shy: Adriano Romualdi, young Evolian party intellectual and son of Pino, for example, clearly defined Europeanness in terms of race (Rossi 2003: 169, Mammone 2015: 87-88).

have also noticed that the passage brings us back to the idea developed earlier of Europe as a project in the future – an ‘aspiration’.

This theme of a common heritage leading towards future unity in the shape of a new ‘Homeland’ called ‘Nation Europe’ is most clearly exemplified in a minority congress motion brought forward by Pino Rauti, leader of the left-wing revolutionary current in the party, in 1982. In a congress in which all three motions stressed the importance of further European collaboration in times of international tension, Rauti’s motion captured most clearly the future-oriented nature of European unity when affirming, ‘[a]nd our continent is Europe, our new Homeland, bigger and more complex, a Homeland that needs to be built in its true structures but which already has all the true and vital contents such as history, tradition, culture and civilisation. A Homeland that has its “soul” even though it has not yet found an adequate form’ (MSI 1982b). Thus, Rauti reasserts the dual view of Europe as a common heritage and a project in the future, a new Homeland which has its own soul but which has yet to find the right political expression. Europe, in this case, appears not only as an identity in the past but also as a future project of unity which will allow that ‘soul’ to thrive.

## RETURN TO THE PRESENT: AN AND THE ROOTING OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

AN’s view of Europe as a community is discussed most extensively in documents from the early 2000s. In fact, while virtually absent from its early documents, the definition of Europe features prominently in the party’s 2002 Congress and 2004 Euromanifesto, possibly as the result of two factors: first, AN’s return to government and the willingness to present itself as a ‘trustworthy’ partner attached to European values (Tarchi 2003: 166-167), and, second, the intensification of debates concerning the European Constitution.

The party’s definition of Europe is marked by both breaks and continuities with the MSI’s view. Like the MSI, AN recognised the existence of a distinct European community and stressed the important place it occupied in its ideology. Unlike the MSI, however, AN was more explicit in its description of Europeanness, building its depiction of it in such a way as to echo the early 2000s debates on the European Constitution. In addition, whereas the MSI presented a view of Europe as a community rooted in the past

and turned towards the future, AN built primarily on the former part of the equation with the objective not of promoting further European unity, but of supporting its existing form.

The 2004 manifesto provides a particularly clear illustration of AN's view of Europe, showing both how the party defined it and the breaks and continuities with the past. The manifesto opens by defining Europe as 'one of the most qualifying ideals of the Italian right' and continues by saying that

when others were looking at Soviet internationalism, the Italian Right responded by affirming the identity of the united Europe, able to bring back into politics that spiritual homogeneity that a millenary spiritual tradition is based on.

When we affirm "Europe", in the political debate as well as in common speak, we mean to allude to not only a certain extension of lands, to a geographical conception of the continent [...]. We intend much more, something deeper, a certain form of civilisation that has stratified in centuries of history, a "way of being" of the human that marks the European, son of a long tradition. A history that has been articulated through two thousand years of common religious history, legal institutes founded on Roman law, reciprocal literary and artistic influences that have clearly selected a basis of common [shared] thought.

It was the Right, in this perspective, to affirm that the Union could not only be a simple and sole sum of economic and commercial agreements, but should base itself on a spiritual yearning able to recall its tradition. (AN 2004)

As far as the definition goes, the passage provides some more clarity concerning AN's view of what Europe is. Like the MSI, AN's programme presents Europe as a 'spiritual' community; however, its defining characteristics are fleshed out more clearly. In particular, beyond recognising the existence of a shared civilisation, it also points to concrete elements of shared heritage, such as Roman law, art and religion. These are further developed in a later passage which addresses the 'roots of Europe':

Europe historically pre-exists the Union that they are trying to build today. Its cultural unity is millenary, filtered through centuries of history. When we talk about values, such as the dignity of the person, the Rule of Law, solidarity, the value of the family, the respect for life, without realising it we refer to those principles that the Judeo-Christian roots have given to Europe. A shared foundation that has become the shared value of European identity. It was the Judeo-Christian roots that have made us arrive,

[...] to that concept of person, of the centrality of the human that represents the distinctive trait of free Europe.

The European constitution cannot be based on “compromises to the lowest common denominator”, which tend to marginalise the spiritual aspect and thus reduce the Union to a simple market. In the moment where we get ready to approve the Constitutional treaty of Europe, the addition of a reference to the Judeo-Christian roots becomes the recognition of the secular unity that pre-existed a mere convenience deal. It means recognising the spirituality of Europe. (AN 2004)

Beyond restating some of the points discussed in the previous section, the passage above further reinforces the view of the existence of a spiritual connection between the European peoples, meaning that the European Union should be a construction representing it. Importantly, what the passage also shows is that Europe is here put at the service of the European Union specifically. In the context of the discussion and ratification of the European Constitutional Treaty (which AN’s leader Gianfranco Fini had been involved in drafting), the second passage stressing the need to use Europe to construct an identity for the European Union appears as particularly relevant. The elements that are mentioned as being defining of this European civilisation are not randomly picked, but rather appear to resonate with EU’s own values as presented in the Treaty, such as the Rule of Law or the dignity of the person. Thus, the language of AN ends up dovetailing rather than clashing with that of the EU, anchoring its view of what Europe is to the specific project of European integration and the narratives underpinning it.

A final point concerning not the content of the AN’s definition of Europe but, rather, what it allows the party to claim about itself and its history, may also be noted. In particular, by identifying Europe as a ‘defining ideal’ in the Right’s history, as well as stressing some elements of continuity with the past, the AN’s ideology of Europe may allow it to claim consistency with its own past ideals. Thus, in spite of its transition from ‘neo-fascism’ to ‘post-fascism’, AN could still, through Europe, keep the allegiance of its historical members, while attracting new ones in virtue of its transition.

## EUROPEAN CIVILISATION VERSUS EUROPEAN UNION: THE FRONT NATIONAL'S TWO EUROPE

Compared with the MSI/AN, the FN has been more explicit in terms of its definition of Europe as a community; however, it has also shifted its positions more significantly than the Italian parties. The FN's discussion of Europe through the lenses of identity has in fact changed rather significantly through time and in conjunction with the evolution of the European Union. While in its early years, Europe was discussed primarily as a form of identification, and the EU as an acceptable, albeit imperfect representation of this civilisation, throughout the years, Europe and the European Union increasingly developed as separate entities, with the European Union slowly becoming an 'anti-Europe' of sorts.

Looking at the Front National's early party literature clearly illustrates the extent to which the party recognised the existence of Europe as a distinct and, in many ways, glorious entity. In a programmatic book from 1984, for example, Jean-Marie Le Pen defined it as

a historic, geographic, cultural, economic and social ensemble. It is an entity destined for action. Europe is currently divided, in decline. Europe is retreating to the borders of the Year 1000, but it guards the possibilities for rebirth, should she rediscover a spiritual, intellectual and political unity and all that has been its spirit: that is, a will to act for civilisation, to refuse to be submerged and vanquished. (Le Pen 1984: 154)

Further stressing the centrality of concepts linked to nationalism in the decontestation of Europe, it is worth noting that beyond defining Europe as a 'historic, geographic, cultural ensemble', the discourse employed on Europe mirrors closely that which the party commonly uses to define the nation. Thus, for example, Europe is presented in romanticised terms and, as is often the case for far right discourse concerning the nation, the narrative of a glorious past is contrasted with a narrative of decline and crisis, symbolised by the idea of a retreat to the borders of the Year 1000 (this will be further discussed in Chapter five). Equally, however, there is a promise that Europe can reacquire its prestige and recover its grandeur. It is, as the 1985 programme defines it, 'a sleeping genie who can and must awake' (Le Pen 1985: 190). Importantly, Le Pen suggests that the way to greatness for Europe is no longer an individual, national, path, but a collective path to be pursued through 'spiritual, intellectual and political unity'. In this sense, Europe

appears as a collective form of identification which is beyond the nation states and whose rebirth is viewed in positive terms.

Identity is also, however, about awareness of similarity and belonging, and while Le Pen is aware of this commonality of Europeans, he laments the absence of a collective European conscience in others. This is done on the one hand, by pushing Europeans to be proud of themselves and, on the other, by putting forward practical suggestions on how to build a European conscience. On the first point, Le Pen considered it necessary for Europeans to be ‘proud of themselves and of their contribution to the world, proud of their past, their age-old culture and their uniquely rich historical experience’ because they ‘brought technologic progress to the world, which all countries and all peoples can benefit from today’ (1985: 189-190). On the second point, it is worth citing the following passage from 1984 at length:

Today, there is no European conscience, and I regret it. I know, in any case, a certain number of reasons [for this].

We were not wise enough to start on the right footing after the Second World War. To forget the conflicts that tore Europe apart in an extremely bloody way [...] To build Europe, one must not continue to pursue morose delectation [...]. It is necessary to stop rubbing salt in the wound. It is necessary to forget mutual faults, if one is to build or rebuild Europe in an effective and emotional way.

I will say, and I have as much of a right as anyone else, that Germany does not bear the entire responsibility of the Second World War.

The Allies in the First World War – and amongst them the French government – also bear a great responsibility in the great ploy, the civil war, that was the Second World War. I know that those who truly suffered, those who really fought, those who really resisted, they have already forgiven. (Le Pen 1984: 156-157)

This passage is particularly relevant in terms of considering how a European conscience, the recognition of an ‘Us’ has to be built. Le Pen both suggests the existence of the potential for a European conscience, and seeks to explain the causes of its ‘deplorable’ absence. In particular, the lack of a European conscience is not blamed on the objective lack of a common basis for the formation of an ‘Us’, but rather, on historic mistakes which have prevented this conscience from forming and transforming Europe into

something close to a nation. Those who are familiar with Renan will recognise an echo of his '*What is a Nation?*' in Le Pen's writing. The notion of the forgetting of mutual faults is quite clearly a rephrasing of his idea that 'the essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common; and also that they have forgotten many things' (Renan 1992 [1882]). The similarities between Europe and a nation continue with the discussion of the Second World War as a civil war between Europeans: civil wars, by definition, are between members of the same group, be it a nation or a state. Thus, Europeans are presented as belonging to a same group, although what that group is remains unclear: not a state, not (yet?) a nation, but a body that could become either.

The passages above all clearly reflect a definition of Europe that goes beyond that of the European Union. Europe appears in them as a specific community, a grand civilisation in need of a missing collective conscience, which is bound to unite somehow. This definition of Europe, however, is in the following years increasingly pitted against the European Union. If in fact, at the beginning, the party's moderate stance on the EU suggests that it was considered to somehow represent this ancient and superior civilization, or at least have the potential to do so if done correctly, following the Single European Act and the Maastricht Treaty, the European Union increasingly became a 'fake Europe' to be pitted against this 'true Europe'. The following quotes from a 1991 pamphlet presenting the Front National to an Anglophone audience, the Front National's 2002 programme and a speech from Marine Le Pen in 2017 helpfully highlight this evolution and its persistence through time:

The Europe which is being constructed in Brussels, with the complicity of the French political class, is a step on the road towards cosmopolitanism. The Front National considers that Europe is not only a great market of industrialised nations, but above all a community of civilisations.

Europe should not, therefore, be "constructed" in Brussels according to Utopian schemes of Eurocrats who dream of a European super-state in charge of everything, destroying nations and opening Europe to third-world immigrants and American or Japanese products. Europe should be organised around the common identity of Europeans and should form a force against external threats. [Original in English] (Groupe des Droites Européennes 1991)



If we first and foremost fight for the continuity and rebirth of France [...] we also know that European nations share the same civilisation and face the same planetary threats.

[...] Cooperation between European nations then rests on the sovereignty of all nations that geographically belong to Europe. But these are free nations who ally: they are not forced to suffer against their will the decisions taken by others. (FN 2002)

For us, Europe is not an idea. Europe is a culture, it's a civilization with its values, its codes, its great men, its accomplishments its masterpieces. For us Europe is not only a history but also a geography, where Turkey does not belong. Europe is a series of peoples whose respective identities exhale the fecund diversity of the continent [...] I believe in a common destiny of the nations and peoples of Europe impregnated by the millenary civilization that they share.

I believe in the need for a European organisation in the great uproar of the world and of globalisation, but in no case can this construction provoke the disappearance of the nations that form it. Our European project will be that of the Nations and peoples, their diversity and their respect. To their European Union we will substitute the Union of European Nations. (Le Pen 2017a)

The citations above all share a common thread: while identifying a common European civilisation shared by all European nations and expressing an attachment to it, they also point to the inadequacy of the European Union as a form to represent it, and even suggest that it is a kind of 'anti-Europe' because it destroys what is distinctive of Europe: its division in nations. Thus, the European Union ends up becoming a threat to this common European civilization - suggesting that while Europe may be a space for identification, the European Union, by actively endangering that space, is not. This point will be further developed in the concluding sections of this chapter, when discussing the relationship between the European and national identities, as well as in Chapter five, when the concept of Threat will be discussed.

## SETTING THE BOUNDARIES OF THE COMMUNITY: WHO BELONGS?

The previous section illustrated how the core concept of Identity has been employed by the studied parties to integrate Europe in their ideology. In particular, it highlighted how it led them to define it as a community of some kind, characterised by certain features which, while common to a group of 'Europeans', do not extend beyond them. If the notion of Identity requires the definition of a certain group, it also implies that the group has set limits and that not everyone can belong, thus creating both an 'in-group' and 'Others' (Triandafyllidou 1998). In fact, while boundaries can be fuzzy or 'blurry' (Alba 2005), groups need to have some criteria for membership to avoid losing meaning.

In line with the view that communities need to be bounded, the MSI/AN and FN did not limit themselves to defining Europe as a community with specific characteristics. They also insisted on its bounded nature, particularly by addressing, both directly and indirectly, the question 'who belongs to Europe?' This is done particularly in reference to the two debates where the parties discuss this boundary question most extensively: firstly, the issue of European irredentism following the division of Europe after World War Two, and, secondly, the extensive debates on EU enlargement and the emerging considerations on who is sufficiently 'European' to belong to the EU. These reflections add an element of definition to the European community identified earlier by specifying who is a part of it, and who needs to be excluded. Creating insiders and outsiders tightens the boundaries of the community and further defines who belongs by building this in opposition to those who do not belong. While the role of the 'Other' will be further explored in Chapter five, it is pertinent for now to consider where the MSI/AN and FN placed European boundaries.

## CONTESTING THE BORDERS OF EUROPE: THE MSI'S EUROPEAN IRREDENTISM

The MSI constructed its view of Europe as a bounded community primarily by stressing the inadequacy of its existing borders. In fact, while the MSI insisted on the idea that Europe did have defined borders, it did not recognise the existing ones as being true representations of the previously defined European community. To understand the roots of this claim, it bears to remember two things: first of all, at the national level, the MSI rejected the territorial losses inflicted upon Italy following World War Two (in particular,

the loss of Istria). Second, and most importantly, the MSI acted principally in the context of the Cold War, when Europe was split in two by the Iron Curtain. As a result, countries which were 'spiritually' European, ended up being excluded from Europe. This informed much of its critique of the shape of Europe in the 1980s and led it to support a form of European irredentism against the 'infamous partition' of Yalta. It also informed its support for the European integration of Spain and Portugal.

The party's rejection of the Yalta agreements is the most pertinent place to observe how the MSI's critique of the existing order led it to posit the existence of a bounded European community. Yalta, in fact, represented in the party's view a distortion of the natural shape of Europe, leading to the exclusion from the continent of countries whose natural place was in it. In this sense, it 'displaced' the natural boundaries of Europe, making its form highly imperfect. The following passage from a 1982 minority congress motion (which, however, reflects positions expressed elsewhere) illustrates this nicely when it says,

Europe, condemned to partition by the infamous and stupid market of Yalta, [...] condemned for decades to political impotence and to the fall, at times slow and at times very fast of its most glorious institutions and of its prestige, cannot and will not resign itself to consider closed, with the ignoble division of its peoples and its territories, the unitary story of its life. Forced to take note of the brutal political and military reality that keeps it divided without the possibility of quick changes, it cannot however not feel in the depths of its soul that its destiny cannot stop at 1945 or at the Oder-Neisse. An infamous border that the never kept promises on human rights and security and the freedom of peoples, signed as a payment in Helsinki [sic] by Russia and its satellites, have neither paid nor cancelled from political memory. (MSI 1982c)

By opposing the existing order, and calling upon a shared destiny, the motion reclaims a return to the 'natural' borders of Europe, borders which would include the captive nations of Eastern Europe as an integral part of it. This form of irredentism remained a strong marker of the party, which, throughout the 1980s, kept stressing the need to review the European boundaries and ensure their congruence with the 'spiritual community' of Europe. Coherently with this position, when the revolutions of 1989 and the fall of the Berlin wall came, the MSI expressed itself in favour of EU accession for the countries of

Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) as to ensure that Europe truly went from ‘the Atlantic to the Urals’, with a united Germany at its heart (MSI 1990c).

The view of Europe as a ‘spiritual community’ which should be enclosed in fitting boundaries also influenced the MSI’s positions on EU enlargement. The MSI supported Portugal and Spain’s EU accession in the 1980s. Perhaps most interestingly, it insisted on the fact that their accession should be based on ‘spiritual’ rather than economic criteria. Therefore, even if their accession would represent a cost for certain countries, including Italy, the party claimed that such considerations should be secondary in deciding who should belong to the EU. This is visible in particular in an editorial by politician and newspaper editor Cesare Mantovani in the *Secolo d’Italia*, in which he takes the occasion to criticise the existing political class on their approach to enlargement and highlight what the MSI milieu considered a more sensible approach:

It is about choosing between the Europe of contingent interests and the Europe of volitions (that has to be built and that must find its ancient and perennial soul, in which there are France, England, Germany, Greece, Italy and the other “five” of the “ten”, but also Spain and Portugal). For the grey and growling managers of the “existent”, whether they be socialist or not, the choice is that of interests. It is totally normal, then, even obvious, that for them, the Spanish and the Portuguese appear first of all as competitors to fear rather than partners to use. For us, on the other side, they are brothers to build Nation Europe with. Ours is not “romanticism”: far from that. It is on the contrary, an “investment” for the future, because Europe will either become a Nation, or it will not have any sense and importance. Not even for interests. (Mantovani 1985)

Here again, we see a point mentioned in the earlier section of ‘Europe as project’, but also of the idea of Europe as a spiritual community which is beyond a community of interest. It is a community of volition, in which the nations are ‘brothers’ rather than mere economic partners.

A discussion on the borders of Europe would not be complete without mentioning the EU’s most controversial enlargement: Turkey. While this was not an issue that was particularly important to the MSI or particularly salient in its time, it is worth mentioning because it will acquire a prominent place in the FN’s discussion of Europe. The MSI did not discuss the issue of Turkey in any of its manifestos or of its congress motions; however, in an article on the *Secolo d’Italia* (Mollicone 1986), there was a reflection on

whether Turkey should or should not join the European Community. The author, journalist and politician Nazareno Mollicone, interestingly, seems to take a rather neutral stance, highlighting both the arguments in favour of Turkish accession, such as its tight political and commercial relations with Europe, which, albeit often conflictual, ‘bred reciprocal knowledge’, and its place in NATO; and those standing against it, namely the Common Agricultural Policy, the risk of Islamisation and the issue of immigration in Germany. While the article does not come to a solution on the question of Turkish integration, it is important to highlight that it does not exclude it a priori but that it considers it a political question, in need of a political answer.

#### PRAGMATISM IN ACTION: ALLEANZA NAZIONALE AND THE POLITICS OF ENLARGEMENT

Compared with the MSI, AN developed its political existence at a time in which the need to define who belonged to Europe was less pressing. In fact, while the previous section showed that it considered Europe to form a distinct community, it dedicated little space to identifying who concretely belonged to it. Reflections of this type emerged exclusively in discussions of EU enlargement, where, however, AN displayed a more practical and less spiritually inclined position on the challenges posed by European integration. Thus, for example, on the accession of Central and Eastern Europe, its first 1994 programme held that

the new Eastern democracies need to be able to count on guarantees with respect to a future membership of NATO and of the European Union. To enter the “European club”, however, it is necessary for them to correspond to specific standards of economic, civic and social maturity. A rushed and premature entry would aggravate the detrimental influences on Western Europe. In any case the eradication of any residue of “real socialism” appears indispensable and especially in virtue of the recycling of the Communist “nomenklatura”, even if it is under the label of socialist or social-democratic. (AN 1994a)

Maintaining the MSI’s tradition of anti-communism, the early AN highlights the potential negative effects that an enlargement to Eastern countries still under the influence of ‘real socialism’ could have. In line with the MSI’s previous commitments, the programme also claims that additional conditions would apply to Croatia and Slovenia, whose accession should be conditional upon successful renegotiation of the Treaty of Osimo (AN 1994a).

Thus, instead of insisting on their ‘natural’ belonging to Europe, it stresses the practical obstacles that stand in Central and Eastern Europe’s way, moving away from the MSI’s idealism towards a more pragmatic stance concerning European borders.

While the 1994 programme has an ambiguous status in the history of the party because it was published before the official transformation of the MSI into Alleanza Nazionale and could therefore be seen as an essentially ‘repackaged’ MSI programme<sup>16</sup>, the positions expressed within it concerning the Europeanness of CEE countries, but also the challenges posed by enlargement, remained a marker of the party in subsequent years. This ambivalence is well illustrated in the 2004 Euromanifesto, which welcomed the ‘reunification’ with the East, but also highlighted its problematic nature:

Now that Europe has recovered those cultures and nations from which it had been separated by the “Iron Curtain imposed by socialism”, the European mission realises a historic objective, but it becomes even harder because it will have to guarantee that social and structural cohesion fixed in its principles. The reunification with the East realises with success an ideal which has been cultivated for long and that had been made possible by the fall of the Berlin Wall. A great opportunity but at the same time a challenge, not without difficulties, which has just started.  
(AN 2004)

Finally, Alleanza Nazionale also adopted an open mind about Turkey, with Fini speaking openly in favour of Turkish accession to the European Union (Il Giornale 2005). In this sense, we can suggest that for AN, the borders of Europe, or at least of the EU, are rather different from those of the Front National, to which the next section now turns.

## EUROPEANS AND THE REST: THE FRONT NATIONAL’S DELIMITED EUROPE

The principle of ‘boundaries’ and ‘borders’ is one that is particularly relevant to the Front National. Mirroring the idea that the notion of identity creates outsiders and insiders, boundaries, in the party’s view, are essential because they allow to not only tell apart ‘Us’ and ‘Them’, but also keep the two separated. As Mégret put it clearly, ‘Border’ is ‘an essential principle’ since ‘a civilisation exists only through organised groups, institutions,

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<sup>16</sup> In fact, while the MSI already ran under the new name of AN in the 1994 election, it did not complete its transition until the Fiuggi Congress of 1995. The 1994 programme can thus be seen as one seeking to present a new project while maintaining an attachment to the traditional themes of the old party

norms and rules that constitute it, and that none of those things can exist with no limits, no borders, between those who belong to a group and the others' (Mégret 1989b). Thus, particularly in its early years, it identified the need for Europe to establish clear boundaries and 'underline what differentiates it from the rest of the world, not what makes it like the rest of the world. It must have limits' (FN 1991: 118). Unlike the MSI/AN, who discussed borders in a primarily 'positive' sense which sought to claim Europeanness for a group of countries, the Front National traced the limits of Europe by discussing both who could be considered European, and who should not belong to the European community.

The boundaries of Europe traced by the Front National in terms of who does belong to Europe resemble closely those identified by the MSI/AN. Like the MSI, the 1980s' FN placed significant emphasis on the misplaced borders of Europe. Speaking from a heavily anti-Communist perspective, it criticised the division of Europe between a Western and an Eastern part, viewing it as an unnatural partition. For example, Le Pen argued that

the people are not quite aware, today, of what is happening in the occupied Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Romania. For a simple reason. For forty years, they have been taught history under the control of teachers who are favourable to the Soviet thesis. Thus, they have little by little, the impression that these countries no longer belong to Europe; that Eastern Europe is the traditional zone of influence of the Slavic world and that that is ok. (Le Pen 1984: 155)

In presenting the borders of Europe as the fruit of a Communist manipulation of history, rather than a reflection of Europe, Le Pen thus challenged the idea that Eastern Europe belonged to a Slavic area of influence (itself an interesting claim in terms of thinking of the ethnic composition of the FN's Europe), and the laziness of the 'people' who had gotten used to thinking of it that way. As an aside, it might be added that this border discussion also brings in other elements of the FN's ideology, such as its previously mentioned rabid anti-communism, and even a measure of populism in the attack on Soviet-sympathising teachers.

The Front National also had to deal with the second border issue that the MSI had to discuss: the borders of the EU and its enlargement to Spain and Portugal. While having no doubts concerning their Europeanness, the FN was less enthusiastic than the MSI in

its assessment of their membership bid, suggesting the need to be cautious in the continuous enlargement of the European Union. These dynamics are captured in the following passage from Le Pen's 1984 programmatic book, which also includes some critical reflections on an existing member of the EU:

Spain and Portugal [...] are surely destined [to belong to Europe]. Who could, without complacency and insolence, refuse to these two great nations, who each wrote some of the most unforgettable pages in European history, to access at the right time? But I say this honestly, this time has not yet come. Europe will first have to demonstrate that it can work with 10 members, before it tries to work with twelve or more. There are some examples that lead one to reflect. For example the attitude of England in the concert of Europe, as well as, if I may say, its previous attitudes. One could, based on its traditional politics, doubt its European will. Should London place itself in the position of blocking the regular functioning of Europe, I believe one would have reason to propose a referendum on the leaving or remaining of Great Britain. [...]

In substance, Spain and Portugal have such an importance in the history of Europe, they filled so many glorious pages that no one could dispute, one day, their entry in the Common Market. It is the same for the captive nations on the other side of the iron curtain and who are historically destined to access the union of Europe. (Le Pen 1984: 161-162)

The passage above is of interest in several respects. First of all, it confirms a point raised earlier in which it was suggested that at least in the mid-1980s, the Front National considered the EU to be at least partially representative of Europe, as the idea of allowing Spain and Portugal to join is based on their relevance in the history of Europe. A similar point is raised about the nations of Eastern Europe, who have a 'historical vocation' to belong to Europe. These points also restate the importance of the previously studied notion of 'shared civilisation' in defining who belongs and who does not belong to Europe. Interestingly, however, belonging to Europe does not only appear to be an issue of belonging to that civilisation, but also of being committed to it. In this sense, the reference to Britain is interesting, because it suggests that it is not enough to be geographically close to Europe to be European: one also needs to have a 'European will'.

The EU's enlargement has also been an occasion for the FN to stress who should not be considered European, thus reinforcing the notion of a boundary between Europeans



and non-Europeans. If the previous passage already suggested some doubts concerning the Europeaness of Britain, the most extensive discussion of who is not European comes into play by reference to Turkey's accession to the EU. The Front National has extensively opposed the accession of Turkey to the EU, tracing clearly the border between Europe and 'Others' to the country. The bulk of the Front National's argumentation is nicely summarised below in a 2000 article by Olivier Martinelli, Jean-Marie Le Pen's chief of staff at the time:

We are told that "Turkey is a European nation". This statement is false on four counts. Geographically, only one thirtieth of the total area of the territory, snatched from the Greeks in 1453, belongs to Europe (the region of Constantinople). Linguistically, Turkish does not belong to the group of European idioms, since it does not stem from Sanskrit, the Indo-European mother-tongue. As far as the population criteria go, the ancestors of the Turks descend from nomadic tribes close to the Mongolians, with the exception of the inhabitants of Thrace, who mixed with the prisoners from the Balkans (Greek, Albanian, Serbo-Croatian and Bosnians). On the cultural plane, finally, the progressive conversion to Islam of this anciently shamanic people, sealed its exclusion from the European sphere, which is fundamentally Christian. (Martinelli 2000)

In a discussion on borders, Martinelli's passage has the advantage of highlighting a variety of ways in which one might think of the notion of boundaries. Starting from the most basic one of geography and ending on the stronger definition of a cultural boundary, which is really a religious boundary, he proceeds to explain all the ways in which Turkey is not European. Here it is worth noting in particular the last two points, which appear to be the ones that truly motivate the Front National and which are restated in several other points as well, for example when the party expresses fear for the 'pluri-ethnicisation' of Europe (FN 2004) and its rampant 'Islamisation' (FN 2009). The result of this procedure is that it excludes Turkey from the borders of European civilization and places it squarely into the category of 'Others', thereby implicitly restating Europe as a specific entity and defining its features more clearly by reference to that which it is not.

## EUROPEAN IDENTITY AND BELONGING: ‘WE THE EUROPEANS’?

The previous section has illustrated how the notion of ‘boundaries’ that is part of the concept of Identity allowed the parties to further delimit and differentiate the European community identified in the first part. It has shown how the MSI/AN and FN both claimed that certain countries clearly belonged to Europe by virtue of their civilisation, but also how the FN identified certain countries as not European. But what did the parties think about their own belonging to that community?

This section focuses on the dynamics of the parties’ attachment to the European community. It argues that all parties considered themselves to belong to Europe; however, their understanding of the relationship between the two identities, national and European, varied, with the Front National seeing them as highly hierarchical and the MSI/AN as moderately hierarchical and complementary.

### ‘AS ITALIANS, WE ARE AND WE INTEND TO REMAIN EUROPEAN’: THE MSI’S DUAL ATTACHMENT

The Movimento Sociale Italiano expressed no doubts about its belonging and attachment to Europe. In spite of an ideology that placed the nation at its centre, the party considered European identity as a derivation of and complement to national identity. Their view on this issue is exposed most clearly in the aforementioned pamphlet *‘Il MSI dalla A alla Z’*. Beyond providing the party’s definition of Europe, the entry on Europeanism also discusses more in depth the party’s feeling of belonging to European civilisation and the relationship between European and National identities:

The national character which is specific to the MSI-DN does not consider the nation as a particularistic and static datum, but as a dynamic and spiritual fact, whose natural tendency is the universal.

Individuality (in this case national) and community (in this case European) are not in opposition but in reciprocal integration and vivification. A community that ignores or steps on individualities would be an abstraction; the same way that an individuality that would deny itself a possibly communitarian destiny would condemn itself to a suffocating atomism.

As Italians, we are and we intend to remain European.  
(MSI 1980: 25)

The passage above highlights several key elements of the MSI's view of Europe. If we break it down to its constituent elements, the entry consists of three key assertions: first of all, it restates the 'national character' of the MSI, all the while clarifying that this 'national character' does not imply a 'static' and closed understanding of the nation, but rather a 'dynamic', 'spiritual' and 'universal' view of it. Secondly, it suggests that there is a positive relationship between 'individuality' and 'community'. The two are not in mutual opposition, but rather in 'reciprocal integration and vivification', suggesting that a European community does not weaken the nation but rather contributes to its strengthening. 'Atomism' and absolute isolation is considered as undesirable, and as a factor that would lessen, rather than reinforce, the nation. Also of interest is the understanding of the nation as a somewhat 'individual' body, suggesting a unified conception of the national body rather than a pluralist view of it. The final segment draws a conclusion based on the previous two: since European and national identity are not in conflict, the party can safely state its belonging to the wider community of Europeans.

While it is true that the MSI claimed a European identity compatible with the national one, their Europeanism was somewhat nuanced by the relationship they saw as existing between the two. For the MSI, in fact, national identity was prior to European identity insofar as only the conscience of a national identity could, in their view, lead to participation in a broader European nation. In this sense, the relationship was hierarchical, with the nation coming first. Romualdi (1979) put it most clearly in an interview on Europe in which he claimed that

to believe in Europe as a nation, one must have believed in England, in Germany, in France, in Italy as Nation; one must have believed and believe in the values that the concept of Nation and Homeland bring with them. Felt that the nation is not only a people, a closed territory within certain boundaries, in which certain feelings and prides and traditions and interests to defend, live. The nation is an idea, a conception of the spirit, it is culture, civilisation, and destiny. (Romualdi 1979: 52)

In line with this view, a later speech by Maurizio Gasparri, at the time president of FUAN (the MSI's university movement), highlighted that 'only he who preserves his historical memory, he who knows how to love his Homeland, he who knows how to defend his identity in front of the globalist homogenisation desired by economic power, will be able to be a good European' (Gasparri 1988). The 'Good European', in this sense, is a 'Good Italian (or French, British, Spanish etc.)' first because only at the national level is one

clearly aware of one's identity. Thus, as the Congress motion *'Impegno Unitario'* from 1990 put it, while there is an attachment to Europe, it is safe to say that one 'is European because one is Italian and not vice versa' (MSI 1990b).

## QUIETLY EUROPEAN? ALLEANZA NAZIONALE'S SILENCE ON EUROPEAN BELONGING

There is an interesting silence in AN's documents on European identity. The relationship between the European and the national is in fact barely touched upon, indicating possibly that it was a 'solved issue' or simply one that the party did not consider particularly important. The following passage from an interview with Fini would appear to support the former interpretation, suggesting as it does that European identity was considered as important to European integration and broadly accepted by the party:

There is no antagonism but synergy between the supranational and intergovernmental aspects of the process of integration. No European institution – he concluded – will be really able to affirm itself without a full European citizenship: the sense of a shared civil and social identity of the Union, a European “demos” that will assert itself in time. The plurality of traditions, of cultures and of the constitutional assets is not a limit to integration but an irreplaceable resource. That is why one reads rightly in the Laeken declaration, Europe is the continent of Liberties, and, above all, of diversities. (Parlato 2002)

Unlike the more abstract discussions of the MSI, Fini here is speaking within a clear debate on the relationship between national and supranational decision making; however, this still allows the advance of some suggestions about the implications of this view on the specific question of the relationship between belonging to a nation and belonging to a supranational construction such as the EU. In particular, it is possible to see the 'synergy between the supranational and intergovernmental aspects of the process of integration' as a modern adaptation in EU jargon of the 'integration and vivification' of the MSI. Whereas the MSI spoke more generally about the relationship between identities, AN here places itself more squarely within the discussion of EU decision-making; but it always suggests that the supranational (in this case, equivalent to community) and the intergovernmental (equivalent to the single nations) decision making processes are in a synergic and, one might add, mutually reinforcing relationship rather than in an antagonistic one. The preceding sentences also display a highly positive view of European

citizenship as a ‘demos-building’ exercise, which does not, however, seem to destroy identities but rather to build on them as ‘irreplaceable resources’. Thus, this idea of creating a European demos based on Europe’s ‘plurality of traditions’, ‘cultures’, ‘constitutional assets’ and ‘diversities’ appears to be reflective of a view in which the national and the supranational have a complementary relationship.

## MORE FRENCH THAN EUROPEAN (BUT EUROPEAN NONETHELESS): THE FRONT NATIONAL’S CONCENTRIC IDENTITIES

The Front National’s position on its own Europeanness is characterised by the previously discussed separation between ‘Europe’ and ‘the EU’. One can, in fact, detect a dual discourse, not unlike the one found on the question of the definition of Europe: on the one side, there is attachment to Europe as a civilizational construct, and, on the other, the EU is seen as an institution that destroys national identities, thus standing against Europe. While the early documents display a more ‘understanding’ approach to the EU as at least holding the potential to express this European civilisation, over time the two are increasingly pitted against one another, or, most frequently, the party only focuses on the EU.

The FN’s view of European and national identity as complementary is explicitly discussed in the party guide *‘Militer au Front’*. The guide, put together by the Institut de Formation National (the body charged with the training and development of FN members) with the objective of ‘educating’ new partisans on the values of the party, stated that

### **Europe and Nation are complementary**

The European will is not opposed to our idea of the nation because both pertain to the unifying principle of identity that is one of the foundations of our doctrine.

In front of cosmopolitanism, we are the defenders of identity, and our identity is made up of the multiple communities we belong to. The family, the blood community, the land, community of roots, the nation, community of history, Europe, community of civilisation, religion, spiritual community. We are attached to all these entities and there is no contradiction between them. One can be attached to Brittany, proud of being Breton, all the while being a French patriot. One can also be French and proud to be European, a descendant of the most formidable civilisation to exist on the planet. (FN 1991: 115-116)

Heavily influenced by the more intellectual current of the party and the ideas of the *Nouvelle Droite* (on which see Bar-On 2007, 2008, Taguieff 1994), this passage illustrates well the extent to which the FN drew on the notion of Identity to define its view of Europe, as well as Identity's central relevance in their ideology. Once again, in line with what was discussed in the first section of the chapter, Europe is defined as a distinct community 'of civilisation, religion, spirituality'. Most importantly, the idea that national and European identities are complementary is stressed from the beginning, and is further developed in the rest of the passage when the idea of multiple identities is defended.

The relationship between national identity and European identity is, however, conceived of as a hierarchical one. Perhaps one of the most famous sentences pronounced by Jean-Marie Le Pen concerning the relationship between being French and being European is presented in his 1984 programmatic book, in which he states that

I find it very easy to reconcile the double idea of a strong homeland in a strong Europe. In the same way that I feel more Morbihanais than Breton, more Breton than French, more French than European, more European than Atlanticist, more Atlanticist than Globalist. I feel for the Homelands what the people feel for their own. (Le Pen 1984: 164)

There are a few points worth highlighting in this paragraph. The first one is that belonging to a European civilisation, and working for the development of a European community, in line with the discourse of the MSI of the same years, is not considered to be in opposition with maintaining national traditions. On the contrary, reconciling 'A strong France in a strong Europe' and 'acting for France and for Europe' appear as a feasible task. However, and more importantly for reflections on identity, the sense of belonging to communities moves from centre to periphery. Le Pen, in fact, presents a variety of communities, suggesting that the relationship between them is based on concentric circles in which the ones closer to the author are also the most important ones. While the relationship is not mutually exclusive, the 'terminal community' (Deutsch 1966) is the one closest to home. Interestingly, of course, in this passage the terminal community would appear to be the department rather than the nation – highlighting some of the tensions in the FN's early years between nationalism and regionalism (see Davies 1999: 88ff for a more extensive discussion of this point).

If in the 1980s and early 1990s this relationship between European and national identity was viewed as positive, from the mid-1980s onwards, as a result of the evolution

in the EU and the disappearance of the Soviet Union as the existential threat that should have led Europe to unite (Le Pen 1984: 153), the party's view of Europeanness started clashing with its discourse on the European Union. From the 1980s, in fact, the FN began to employ the concept of Identity not only to define Europe, but also to criticise the European Union. Thus, for example, the FN MEP Jean-Marie Le Chevallier published an article advocating that the EU, in the name of a 'European spirit', was seemingly imposing a new identity that might destroy the national one by undoing the nation (Le Chevallier 1988). The 'new identity' that the author refers to here and which is criticised in other documents as well is a cosmopolitan identity that is neither national nor European, in which borders become secondary, both within the Union, through for example the introduction of voting rights for foreign citizens, and between the EU and the rest of the world through the pursuit of primarily economic integration. The line of criticism of the EU as harming national identities remains relevant throughout the years, with the EU accused at various times of wanting to 'destroy the identities of the peoples' through standardisation, immigration and European 'destruction' (Lang 2002), by 'balkanising' nations (Le Pen 2003) or by removing sovereignty (Le Pen 2016).

This conflict between 'European identity' and the EU's effects on national identity led the party to increasingly resort to the Europe/EU distinction discussed in the first section. This has allowed them to still claim to be attached to Europe, while rejecting the political project of the EU. Thus, for example, the concluding section of the 2009 Euromanifesto insisted that

just like Africans are not "against Africa" or Asians "against Asia", neither are the French patriots and their friends and European allies "against Europe" as a geographical, human and cultural reality, nor against any form of European cooperation. They are aware of the fact that their Nations belong geographically to Europe. They acknowledge, beyond the extreme diversity of national characters, a certain shared cultural patrimony in the peoples of Europe. And since vicinity imposes some relationships, they want them to be peaceful and fruitful. But they are resolutely against the fraud that consists, under this cover of cooperation, to build a super state that will destroy their individual identities, their sovereignties, their liberties, without even building a truly European ensemble but a euro-globalist space, open to all winds, to all human fluxes, to goods and capitals, especially when these people are the vanguard of a settlement colonisation [...] In other words, the Nationals fight

resolutely the criminal evolutions of the European Union. This refusal of a euro-globalist super State is compatible with the true European tradition, since Europe, this peninsula situated at the extremity of the huge Asian continent, is the space that, throughout the History of humanity, has invented the freedom and equality of Nations, governing themselves freely without external interference, a unique model without equivalent elsewhere. (FN 2009: 4)

The citation above summarises several points of the Front National's most recent view on the question of its Europeanness. In particular, it highlights an attachment to a 'true Europe' as a shared cultural space and criticism of the 'fake' European Union as seeking to create a 'globalist' Europe that will destroy national identities and Europe with it. Marine Le Pen advanced a similar point more succinctly in her previously cited speech in Poitiers when she said '[e]ven though we are resolutely opposed to the European union, we are resolutely European, I'd go as far as saying, I'd go as far as saying [sic] that it is because we are European that we are opposed to the European Union' (Le Pen 2017a). While one might want to read this statement as a means for Le Pen to backtrack on the positions on Europe that negatively affected her 2017 campaign, it also inserts itself well into the history of the party, suggesting that a 'silenced' discourse merely re-emerged after a campaign focused on the EU rather than Europe. Being European, then, is not in question for the FN: what is in question is the extent to which the EU has anything to do with Europe.

The previous sections have shown that beyond viewing Europe as a specific bounded community, the MSI/AN and FN have also considered it to be a community of belonging. They have expressed an attachment to Europe which, while secondary to the national one, still made an appearance in their ideology. Thus, their use of the notion of Identity has not only served to define Europe but, also, to express their links with it and its place in their broader self-definition.

Before moving on to the next section, it is pertinent to briefly address some of the differences that have emerged in the parties' understandings of European identity and offer some reflections on why these may have appeared. In fact, while the parties all drew on the concept of Identity to define Europe, the analysis showed that there were also some areas of divergence in their interpretations of it. Two elements of difference were



particularly striking: first, the different ways of constructing identity, especially in terms of its temporality; and second, the different positions concerning its relationship with the EU. Only the first point will be discussed now, while the second one will be addressed in the following chapters.

On the first element of difference, the section on the definition of Europe highlighted that the parties displayed a divergent understanding of the temporality of identity, represented typically by the MSI's vision of Europe as a project in the future, as opposed to the FN's view of it as rooted exclusively in the past. Offering a conclusive answer to why the parties expressed different views of Europe as a project in time would require further research beyond the scope of this thesis; however, two explanations appear plausible.

The first explanation is strictly linked to the evolution of the European Union itself: while in the 1970s and 1980s the EU had yet to acquire a more definite form, the 1990s 'fixed' a certain course of integration and defined the boundaries of the project more clearly. Thus, while in the 1970s and 1980s it was still possible for the MSI to think of it as a project in the future, this was less pertinent from the 1990s onwards. While helping understand why the AN, compared to the MSI, focused less on Europe's future, it does not help understand why for the FN, Europe was always something in the past.

Here it is possible to advance a second explanation: namely, that part of the difference stemmed from different experiences with national identity being projected on the European level. The MSI, in fact, unlike the FN, had to deal with a national identity 'in progress': unlike France, Italy lacked a clearly defined national identity due to its late unification. Massimo D'Azeglio's famous quote 'Italy has been made, now we have to make Italians' pointed clearly towards the difficulties in finding a shared sense of Italianness at the time of unification, and the problem remained alive even in later years. In this sense, the party may have been keener on espousing the idea of identity as something that, while drawing on the past, was also built in the future. It may also have made its understanding of boundaries more fluid and less based on exclusion (a characteristic that the AN maintained) because it was aware that a common identity could be constructed. The FN, in contrast, came from a country with a more unitary history and strong sense of its own identity (although when and where French identity was born is subject to dispute; e.g. Weber 1976). It also, as a result, had a clearer sense of boundaries between 'Us' and 'Them', with these notions being unlikely to shift because boundaries

were fixed in the same way that identity was. As a result of these different experiences, for the MSI, an incomplete national identity translated into a vision of Europe as a project in the future, and, for the MSI and AN, as a project in which inclusion mattered more than exclusion. For the FN, on the other hand, it informed a view of Europe as a community in the past, rather than a ‘work in progress’, and European identity as something objective and already there, which did not only include insiders but, also, excluded outsiders.

## OPENING THE CORE? FROM EUROPE TO IDENTITY

The sections so far have been concerned with detailing how the MSI/AN and FN mobilised the core concept of Identity to integrate Europe in their ideology. They have shown that they used it to define Europe as a bounded community to which they claimed to belong. This section turns the question on its head and asks how this inclusion of Europe may have altered their ideological core; in other words, since the morphological approach suggests that decontestation can go from centre to periphery, as well as from periphery to centre (Freedon 1998a: 79-81), what are the implications of this inclusion of Europe via the concept of Identity for the concept itself and the parties’ ideology more broadly?

In the context of parties famously defined by a ‘nativism’ that considers non-natives as ‘fundamentally threatening’ (Mudde 2007: 19), the most conspicuous effect of the inclusion of Europe through the concept of Identity would appear to be the opening of their ideological core to a supranational element. The parties’ claim to belong to Europe, in particular, appears not merely as a recycling of the concept of Identity in a new setting, but also as a transformative factor that ‘opens’ that concept of Identity so as to be able to include transnational allegiances. Thus, the Nation, while remaining the fulcrum of the ideology, is not conceived of as an exclusive community of belonging but as one among others (for a similar point, see also Zúquete 2008: 329).

To illustrate this, let us analyse further two previously mentioned citations: the MSI’s ‘Europeanism’ entry in the party’s A-Z booklet; and Marine Le Pen’s 2017 speech in Poitiers:

Europeanism: it is the ancient and always alive aspiration towards European unity, in the conscience of a community of interests and

destinies, of history, of civilisation, of tradition among Europeans. [...]

The national character which is specific to the MSI-DN does not consider the nation as a particularistic and static fact, but as a dynamic and spiritual fact, whose natural tendency is the universal.

Individuality (in this case national) and community (in this case European) are not in opposition but in reciprocal integration and vivification. A community that ignores or steps on individualities would be an abstraction; the same way that an individuality that would deny itself a possibly communitarian destiny would condemn itself to a suffocating atomism.

As Italians, we are and we intend to remain European. (MSI 1980: 25)

On Europe, the MEPs and their assistants will be charged with developing the European project because, even though we are resolutely opposed to the European Union, we are resolutely European, I'd go as far as saying, I'd go as far as saying [sic] that it is because we are European that we are opposed to the European Union. [*Le Pen then discusses the regional programmes, as well as Macon's speech on Europe in the Sorbonne University. She opposes to Macron's view of Europe to the Front National's one and continues.*]

For us, Europe is not an idea. Europe is a culture, it's a civilization with its values, its codes, its great men, its accomplishments, its masterpieces. For us Europe is not only a history but also a geography, where Turkey does not belong. Europe is a series of peoples whose respective identities exhale the fecund diversity of the continent [...] I return to the definition brought forward by Paul Valery in considering as European all peoples of each land that has been successively Romanised, Christianised and subject, in matters of the mind, to the rigour of the Greeks. I believe in a common destiny of the nations and peoples of Europe impregnated by the millenary civilization that they share. (Le Pen 2017a)

The passages above are interesting because they are practical illustrations of how the parties have sought to accommodate a transnational element in their nationalist ideologies, 'opening' them as a result. For the MSI, the way forward was to stress the commonalities of Europeans and insist on the relationship between 'individuality' and

‘community’. Thus, it reassessed the importance of the individual nations, as well as the need for a communal destiny that allowed for their full realisation. The result was a notion that a transnational belonging strengthens the national belonging, and should, therefore, be embraced and valued.

For the FN, in the specific passage above, reclaiming Europeanness proceeded in three steps. First, it reclaimed the meaning of Europe as opposed to the EU, an element which allowed for the identification of a certain view of Europe that the party could credibly profess to belong to. Second, by defining the nature of that Europe and arguing its heritage lives in all European nations, the party introduced an element of transnationalism into national identity. Third, by identifying Europe’s ‘fecund diversity’ (and, by extension, national diversity) as its defining characteristic, it implied an idea expressed explicitly elsewhere (e.g., FN 2009) that the nation is the highest achievement of European civilisation. This creates an equivalence between belonging to the nation and belonging to Europe by implying that ‘all national identity is European identity’, thus opening the ideology while retaining a national attachment.

One might, of course, argue that perhaps it is not the integration of Europe that opens the ideology, but that the ideology was already open to start with. While this is certainly a possibility, the fact, for example, that the MSI’s entry feels the need to stress that the national and the European are not in opposition would suggest that even if the ideology already held the potential to be open, this was not how it was usually construed. Thus, the notion that national and European were compatible was not an obvious statement, but one that needed some form of justification.

This process of ‘opening’ has its limits, clearly, and the citations captured that as well when the FN stressed that no form of European unity should harm the nations that form it, or when the MSI stressed that as Italians they wanted to remain European, suggesting that the former precedes the latter. The parties are European because they are Italian and French. Their allegiance to Europe is based on the fact that it is the civilisation that created the Nation, their primary community of belonging. One may also wish to question the extent to which being ‘European’ signals openness, or if it just a dubious ethnic frame being recast at a higher level.

Overall, however, the reading of Europe through the prism of identity would appear to at least moderately open the parties’ ideological core by suggesting that the

nation is not the only ‘natural’ community. While the recognition that nationalism does not preclude transnational allegiances is hardly exceptional in itself, as a quick look at minority nationalist parties might show, it does appear somewhat more counterintuitive in the case of far right parties where a ‘closed’ and hierarchical view of belonging dominates.

This acknowledgement of a ‘European belonging’ may also be expected to affect the definition of who is considered a treacherous outsider by the parties. Fellow Europeans may, in this sense, be viewed as less dangerous than other ‘Others’, or even be viewed as ‘brothers in arms’ who, by virtue of a shared identity, are not a threat to that nation. Thus, while not being ‘nationals’, they would still not qualify as ‘Others’. This certainly appeared in party documents when, for example, Le Pen called for a ‘European preference’ (Le Pen 1988), or in both parties’ view that Europeans could and should collaborate across borders because they are alike. This may also lead to a broader question concerning whether this has any impact on their nativism as a whole. In particular, it may lead to ask whether they would consider all non-native people as equally dangerous to the state’s cultural homogeneity, or if it would be possible to identify a less threatening category of non-natives which, while not strictly belonging to the native group, could still be considered sufficiently similar not to present a threat to it.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter advanced two arguments concerning the far right’s ideology of Europe. First of all, in response to the research question ‘how do far right parties view Europe through ideological lenses and how do they incorporate it in their system of beliefs?’ it argued that the studied parties employed the core concept of Identity to define and incorporate Europe in their ideology. This contention was considered to be broadly in line with the expectation set out in chapter two that far right parties would draw on the old to explain the new, because, since far right parties are primarily nationalist parties, their ideology draws heavily on the idea of specific identities that distinguish groups from one another. The empirical sections illustrated this argument by showing how the MSI/AN and FN employed the notion of Identity to define what Europe and the Europeans were, to set clear boundaries between the European ‘us’ and the foreign ‘other’, and to claim allegiance to this European community. The table below summarises the findings of the

analysis, highlighting both the sense in which identity was discussed as well as the time period in which each understanding was dominant or present.

TABLE 2: SUMMATIVE TABLE OF IDENTITY AND EUROPE

Main concept	Subthemes	Present in		
		MSI	AN	FN
Identity	<b>Europe as a common civilisation:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Europe distinct civilisation, with unique history</li> <li>• Europeans specific community representing this civilisation</li> </ul>	Present throughout	Present throughout	Dominant 1980s, present throughout
	<b>Europe as a bounded community:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Europe an area with inclusive and exclusive geographical borders</li> <li>• Europe symbolically bounded and distinct from ‘Others’</li> </ul>	Dominant 1980s in relation to Spain, Portugal and CEE	Present 1990s in relation to CEE, absent 2000s	Present throughout, in relation to Spain, Portugal, CEE and Turkey
	<b>National and European identities:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• European and national identity complementary and placed in hierarchical relation (1)</li> <li>• EU a potential threat to national identity (2)</li> </ul>	(1) Present, complementary, moderately hierarchical	(1) Present, complementary, moderately hierarchical	(1) Present, complementary, strongly hierarchical. (2) Present

Second, the concluding part of the chapter suggested that this decontestation of Europe through the notion of Identity led to an opening of the parties’ ideological core, making them appear as less ‘closed’ than commonly assumed. Thus, through their ideology of Europe, the MSI/AN and FN, while still falling well within the nationalist camp, could signal a level of ‘openness’ to other identities and peoples.

## 4. THE BATTLE FOR FREEDOM: EUROPE AND LIBERTY

The previous chapter started answering the question of how the MSI/AN and FN have viewed Europe through ideological lenses and how they have incorporated it in their system of beliefs. It argued that the parties drew on the core concept of Identity to define Europe as a distinct social grouping with discrete boundaries and a specific relation with national identity. It also suggested that the incorporation of a supranational element in their ideology led to its ‘opening’ to a transnational form of identification.

This chapter continues the exploration of the concepts used by far right parties to define Europe. First, it argues that, beyond the concept of Identity, the MSI/AN and FN have drawn upon the concept of Liberty to decontest Europe. Second, it suggests that the way in which Europe is decontested through Liberty draws on concepts which are not exclusive to the far right, but rather are part of a broader tradition of thinking about the nation.

The following sections develop these two contentions. The chapter opens by explaining why Liberty may be seen as a core concept of nationalism. It then illustrates how the studied parties employed the concept in two different ways: first, equating Liberty with ideas of European and national autonomy and democratic self-rule; and second, linking it to expansionary ideas of power and projection outside European boundaries. The concluding section reflects on how the integration of Europe may have shifted the balance in far right ideology, bringing more attention to questions of Liberty which, rather than being exclusive to the far right, may be viewed as aligned with broader discourses about the nation and Europe.

### MOBILISING THE CORE: FROM LIBERTY TO EUROPE

The previous chapter suggested nationalism is an ideology of two parts: first, a ‘boundary-building’ element which allows one to define the national group and who belongs to it, and create a sense of solidarity between them; and second, a ‘political’ (as in concerned

with power, Breuilly 1993: 1) element that reclaims certain rights for that group. It is on this side that the parties draw to further integrate Europe in their ideology, specifically by appealing to the concept of Liberty.

The concept of Liberty is undoubtedly one of the ‘essentially contested concepts’ (Gallie 1955) of the political world, so it is worth discussing briefly the way in which it is employed here and why it is viewed as encapsulating ideas of ‘political’ nationalism. If we start with the second part of the question, it bears repeating that the boundaries that nationalism creates through notions of identity are often being created for a reason, usually the representation and self-government of the identified nation (Ichijo 2009: 156; Patten 1999: 1; Kedourie 1993: 1). While this can be seen as being possible only in the framework of a nation-state, where the nation controls the administrative and territorial apparatus of the state (e.g., Gellner 1983: 1), we may see this as a broader demand for recognition of the national group which may take varied forms that are not state-seeking (Brubaker 1998: 266-267) or even take place within established but allegedly threatened national boundaries, as proponents of ‘neo-nationalism’ suggest (Eger and Valdez 2015: 127). These ideas of political representation are here summarised as forming part of the concept of ‘Liberty’ because they encompass the notions that the nation is free to make its own rules, and free from external interference.

Along with Identity, the concept of Liberty occupies a core place in far right ideology because it encapsulates the idea that the nation, beyond being a specific community, is also endowed with certain political rights that require expression and protection. Unlike the individual Liberty of the liberal tradition, this form of Liberty is understood as a collective one, where the unit of analysis is the nation as a holistic community, rather than the individual citizen.<sup>17</sup> The collective character of this Liberty which leaves little space to considerations about individual citizens is perhaps the most distinguishing aspect of how it is employed by the far right, although the concluding sections of this chapter will illustrate that, while it is a core part of their ideology, it is built on shared discourses about the nation.

Like the concept of Identity, this core nationalist concept of Liberty is redeployed by the studied parties in their definition of Europe. When the parties use Liberty to

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<sup>17</sup> While one may note significant overlap between this understanding of Liberty and the more familiar notion of ‘national sovereignty’, this thesis opts for the former in an attempt to reflect the language of the parties and provide a more fine-grained analysis of what Liberty has meant through time.



decontest Europe, they adopt two different meanings of Liberty that are consistent with the ideas identified in the previous passages. Firstly, they equate it with concepts of autonomy and self-rule to restate the importance of those principles for Europe and, in the case of the Front National, for the nation. In the realm of external relations between Europe and the world, they discuss Liberty as a form of power and projection to present Europe as a community endowed with (or in need to regain) power outside its borders and the ability to shape world politics. While the individual meanings of Liberty discussed by the parties shift over time, it is important to note that the notion of Liberty remains in one form or another, highlighting its central role in the parties' ideology of Europe.

The parties' use of Liberty to decontest Europe results in a dual discourse where the concept's relationship with Europe shifts. On one hand, Liberty is used to present the European community as one that has specific rights in terms of autonomy and self-government and, equally, in a rather expansive understanding of self-expression, has the right to express them outside its own boundaries. On the other hand, it is used to restate the specific, political rights of the nation against the EU as a body that limits autonomy and self-rule.

The meanings of Liberty employed by the studied parties to add definition to their view of Europe are addressed in turn in the following sections. The concluding section reflects on these meanings and suggests that it may pay to underline their similarities with understandings of the nation and Europe that are not specific to the far right.

## FREE IN THEIR OWN COUNTRIES: RECLAIMING AUTONOMY AND SELF-RULE

The concept of Liberty has many facets, but in the ideology of the MSI/AN and FN it appears predominantly in connection with ideas of autonomy in the external realm and self-rule in the domestic realm. This entails pushing both for the need for the nation to be free from external constraints on political action (such as having one's policies dictated from abroad), and defending its right to advance whatever political measures it sees fit within its borders. This can encompass the notion that such decisions should be taken in a democratic form, although, as the next sections will show, 'democratic self-rule' was not equally important to the different parties.

With respect to Europe, ideas of an autonomous Europe free from external influence dominated the MSI/AN and FN in the 1980s. In the context of a divided Europe and the Cold War, the autonomy of Europe was a key concern of the MSI/AN and FN, who saw Europe as being largely subjugated by external powers and hence unable to make its own decisions. Following the end of the Cold War, however, the parties took rather different routes. In the course of its transformation into Alleanza Nazionale, the MSI dropped concerns about autonomy from external actors and began to focus more on issues of democratic self-rule within the European Union. In contrast, and particularly following the changes introduced by the Maastricht Treaty, the Front National turned from worrying about the autonomy of Europe to being concerned with reclaiming domestic self-rule against the European Union.

#### EUROPE BETWEEN DECLINE AND REBIRTH: THE MSI'S CALL FOR EUROPEAN AUTONOMY

In the bipolar world of the Cold War, the concept of Liberty occupied a central place in the MSI's definition of Europe. In particular, the Italian party stressed the need for Europe to be free from extra-European influences. This call for a 'free Europe' was built around two pillars: first of all, the observation of a problematic lack of European autonomy; and second, the call for a return of autonomy to Europe.

As far as the first pillar is concerned, in the MSI's definition of Europe, Liberty was mobilised to identify an element that Europe was missing: Europe was defined as a space under foreign influence and in decline because it was unable to make its own decisions and exert influence in the world. The assessment of Europe as a continent in decline can be observed quite clearly in the following passage from the 1978 programmatic book *'Intervista sull'Eurodestra'*, published on the occasion of the first open elections to the European Parliament. It details the programme of the *Eurodestra* (Euroright), which brought together the MSI, the French *Parti des Forces Nouvelles* (PFN) and the Spanish *Fuerza Nueva* (F/N). In the preface of the *Intervista*, the book editor and MSI member Michele Rallo commented on the current situation of Europe, noting how

Europe, after the two world conflicts, has lost its role as protagonist of History. The Yalta agreements have subjected its oriental regions to Soviet imperialism, while its western regions

are today exposed to a double pressure, military (reinforcement of the Warsaw Pact) and political (Eurocommunism), from that same imperialism. (Almirante 1978: 7)

Beyond lamenting the sorry state of Europe, the passage above also offers some clues concerning who is to blame for Europe's loss of clout. The 'Yalta agreements' appear as the main culprit of this state of affairs, because they made it possible for the Soviet Union to exert unprecedented pressure on Europe and deprive it of its autonomy.

The tight link between the Yalta agreements, European decline and the lack of European autonomy is addressed more explicitly by Pino Romualdi, another one of the MSI's historical leaders in his *Intervista sull'Europa*:

In Yalta, in the name of anti-fascism, the United States and Russia [...] carved up the world and Europe as well. In that moment, even before then, of the so-called liberation from the Germans and the Fascists, therefore before the occupation of its territory by the Soviet and Anglo-American armed forces, Europe was deprived [...] of its freedom and its political independence; and destined to become – from centre of the world as it still was at the time [...] a huge territory divided in two and subjected on the one side to the brutal Soviet imperialism and on the other side to the decisive influence of the American imperialism. It was in Yalta that Stalin was authorised to annex [...] more than a hundred million Europeans; and that America made all the great peoples of Europe its protectorate. (Romualdi 1979: 47)

Romualdi's passage is significant because it highlights the way in which Europe's loss of political independence as a result of Yalta was inextricably linked with its decline. It also signals that the responsibility for European decline and lack of autonomy lay with both the Soviet Union and the USA. Thus, while recognising a qualitative difference between the two superpowers, especially as further in the passage he opposes the notion of 'empire' and that of 'protectorate' by conceding that the USA at least left the liberty and democracy of its protectorates intact (Romualdi 1979: 48), the position of Europe is still an unpalatable one, made of weakness and submission to external control.

The acknowledgement of a lack of autonomy fed directly into the MSI's second use of the notion of Liberty, namely, as something that Europe needed to reclaim as a defining element. Only by retrieving autonomy could Europe, in the MSI's view, recover from its decline and start making its own decisions. Thus, for example, the 1979 party manifesto highlighted that '[t]he realisation of the autonomy and independence of Europe

is therefore an historical goal of the European national Rights, aware that by doing so they are also serving the cause of their respective Nations' (MSI 1979c: 5). In a similar vein, in the 1979 majority congress motion '*Continuare Per Rinnovare*', speaking of the tense international situation between the USA and the USSR, Giorgio Almirante and his faction highlighted that the crisis was

also an evolutionary crisis that could have positive outcomes as far as Europe is concerned, in the limits in which Europe will realise that it is a continent, that it does not have to accept to be tied by the shackles of Yalta, to have within its hands the instruments to affirm its autonomy, to have the obligation and even the interest to look globally to its people, getting out of the restricted view of the North Sea, and to be able to weight on the fortunes of the world. (MSI 1979a)

Similar points were also iterated in the minority congress motion brought forward by the leader of the MSI's left-wing revolutionary current Pino Rauti, in which his faction highlighted the need to make Europe a 'Third Way' between the two imperialisms that could mediate between them so as to 're-establish equilibrium' and 'lead world politics out of the duopolistic logic in which it has been closed for thirty five years' (MSI 1979b). In all these passages, autonomy appears as an essential goal worth pursuing, as a way to return Europe to its rightful place in the world.

This need to reclaim autonomy translated into concrete policy measures and particularly into the demand for a European common defence. In fact, the MSI considered necessary the creation of a specifically European defence, which would be close to, but independent of, NATO and would allow Europe to take care of its own, as the passage below from the 1979 Congress majority motion illustrates:

If it is true, in fact, that the defence of the European continent requires and will still require for some time the solidarity and military alliance of the United States, it is even more true that, as long as Europe will not be in the condition to defend itself on its own and will not determine conditions of absolute parity with the other continents, the same north-American alliance will continue to have blackmailing implications and it might happen, as it has already too many times, that a poorly masked dialogue of collaboration between Russia and the United States develops on its [Europe's] shoulders. (MSI 1979a)

Perhaps the most important part of the passage above is the idea that only by having an independent defence would Europe be able to be free of the twin imperialisms of the USSR and the USA. In fact, while acknowledging the necessity to work within NATO, the motion also highlights the high levels of suspicion existing in the party vis-à-vis the American ally.

This suspicion towards the USA reflects the broadly conflicted relationship that the MSI had with NATO as yet another external constraint on European autonomy. While opting for support for the Atlantic Alliance in its early years, the MSI always remained uncomfortable in that position and had a minority that opposed it, considering it necessary to overcome NATO and move towards a purely European pact (see for example the congress motions 1987a: 59; 1987b: 32; see also Parlato 2005: 140ff). Even among those who supported it, however, there was the concern of avoiding a ‘servile’ relationship and reclaiming parity in the relationship between Europe and the USA, as highlighted by the slogan ‘Allies yes – Double crossing no – Slaves never’ (MSI 1987d: 5) and by the following passage from the same manifesto:

Since our first political battles and congresses, we always said that we would be allies, but that Europe must take part in its own destiny, must be permanently consulted at all levels, actions must be coordinated, Europe cannot be placed in front of the fait accompli; Europe must count more than it has until now; but, because of this, it must have conscience, Europe, of its own future and indispensable unity. (MSI 1987d: 5)

The MSI’s definition of a ‘free Europe’ remained very much confined to the idea that Europe should be free from external constraints. While the party reclaimed autonomy for Europe and viewed this as a precondition to European power (an element which will be discussed in later sections), this autonomy did not appear to be the precondition to a clearer domestic programme of self-rule, either for the nation or for Europe.

Unlike AN and the FN, the MSI also appeared uninterested in the relationship between Europe and democracy as a specific form of self-rule. In fact, as the following sections will show, AN and the FN increasingly involved discussions of democratic self-rule in their ideology of Europe. This concern, however, remained muted in the MSI, and this is perhaps unsurprising given the negative view the party held of democratic institutions as ineffective and unable to fulfil their stated purposes. In line with this, when the party did use the notion of democracy to discuss the European Union, it used it to

criticise the EU for its excessive attachment to parts of democracy. Thus, for example, in an article from 1985, the MSI politician and director of the *Secolo d'Italia* Cesare Mantovani, argued that: '[Europe] says that it believes in democracy, peace, economic and social progress, in its civilisation. And it is true. But as far as the process of political unity is concerned, these ideals turn against Europe like paradoxes'. This is a starting point for a critique of the rejection of the majority voting principle in the EU which, in his view, stifled progress for the process of integration. In a similar vein, the 1987 minority congress motion '*Proposta Italia*' (1987c) highlighted how the EU's parliamentarianism made the construction essentially inconclusive and subject to partisan interests. As a result, democracy was not presented as a value in itself and one in need of protection, but, rather, as an imperfect system of governance which prevented the European institutions from being truly effective. In this sense, it is possible to see a clear echo of the MSI's opposition to parliamentary democracy as a form of rule, along with an attachment to European integration.

#### OVERCOMING DEMOCRATIC DEFICITS: ALLEANZA NAZIONALE AND THE MAKING OF A DEMOCRATIC EU

Whereas the MSI focused primarily on the notion of Europe as a continent needing to become free from external control, such concerns disappeared in Alleanza Nazionale's post-Fiuggi documents. Fostered by a historical context in which the autonomy of Europe was no longer in question and the growth in power of the European Union post-Maastricht brought new issues to the fore, Alleanza Nazionale shifted its focus on questions of democratic self-rule within the European Union. In particular, AN started tackling questions about the balance between a nation's ability to pass its own laws and the need for shared European commitments, and how this balance could be assured with respect to democratic procedures.

Unlike the FN, which will be discussed later, in which the EU institutions are criticised for being undemocratic, or for the MSI, where democracy was seen as a hindrance to the European project, in Alleanza Nazionale there was a constructive engagement with 'giv[ing] Europe Institutions that have the necessary competence to democratically manage the policies of the Member States which, under the subsidiarity principle, will be a prerogative of the Union' (AN 1995). This commitment to finding an

appropriate balance between the national and the supranational, as well as to fostering democratic participation, is well captured in the following passage from the tellingly called 2002 programmatic conference ‘The Homeland wins, Europe is born’:

In a Europe that, by now, manages from Brussels more than half of the decisions that have an impact on national politics (with significant peaks in the economic and agricultural sectors), it is necessary to guarantee the maximum involvement of citizens and their respective representative bodies: the future of Europe cannot be marked by the uniformity of centralism but by unity in diversity. In the enlarged Europe it will be even more evident that there is an actual recognition of the principle of subsidiarity: the Union deserves those areas which benefit clearly from a European discussion (foreign and security policy, monetary stability and commercial rules, immigration, asylum law, counterterrorism, agricultural policy, research and innovation, etc...). Edmund Stoiber, recalling for that matter a concept expressed by Tony Blair, recently summarised it: “Integration where necessary, decentralisation where possible”. (AN 2002)

If AN drew on the notion of democracy in its attempts to define the correct balance between the national and the supranational in the EU, it also employed it to critique certain features of the latter. In particular, its commitment to subsidiarity and national democratic involvement came with a strong opposition to bureaucratic and technocratic bodies in Brussels, perhaps the main point of convergence with the Front National (albeit with some important differences). In fact, if the AN considered the ‘technocratic structures’ of the EU as reflective of a ‘Jacobin, technocratic, dirigiste and elitist Europe’ (AN 2004), or as contributing to endangering the European project by taking ill-judged decisions (Carrino 2008), it did not take this as a reason to reject the EU *in toto*. Democracy in this sense served to define the appropriate contours of the EU, but not as a concept to be used against it. While the familiar debate on the EU’s democratic deficit and its remoteness from its citizens made itself heard, this was mostly done in a pragmatic way in which the focus was on correcting perceptions and structures that gave rise to the issue, rather than merely pointing towards them as a source of illegitimacy for the EU as an actor.

## FROM AUTONOMY FOR EUROPE TO SELF-RULE AGAINST THE EU: THE FRONT NATIONAL'S SOVEREIGNTIST EVOLUTION

There are strong similarities between the MSI and the early FN's early use of Liberty as something Europe needed to recover. Like the Italian party, in fact, the Front National conceived of Europe as a space in decline, deprived of autonomy, and in need of retrieving it. However, whereas AN abandoned concerns about autonomy, the FN retargeted its own worries against the European Union, claiming the need for the nation to re-establish (democratic) self-rule against an ever-encroaching EU.

As for the MSI, the FN's concern with autonomy in the 1980s was preceded by the acknowledgement of a 'Europe in decline'. As Jean-Marie Le Pen put it:

The Allies in the First World War – and among them, the French government – carry a responsibility in this great ploy, in this civil war that was the Second World War [...] What appeared to post-war men is that, following the occupations of Europe by the Soviet army, the appearance of the two super-giants on the world scene, our European nations, who made the law in the world in the previous century, had brusquely fallen to the status of, if one may say it, second order nations. (Le Pen 1984: 157)

Le Pen's passage presents us with a reading of the state of Europe in the 1980s and clearly highlights why the party leader felt that Europe was in decline following the 'great civil war' that was World War Two. In particular, the decline of Europe and its nations is put down to the partition of Europe and the appearance of the 'two super-giants', the USA and the USSR. Thus, like the MSI, Le Pen also identifies a clear culprit for the decline of Europe in the 'twin imperialisms'.

As with the MSI, this observation of the decline of Europe paved the way for an analysis that pushed for the return of autonomy to Europe and 'the right of the European peoples to rule themselves, to self-affirm and search for power and global reach [rayonnement] in the respect of their roots' (Le Pen 1985: 189). Autonomy, in this sense, appeared as a precondition to the other meaning of Liberty which will be discussed in the next section of this chapter, and clearly aligned with the goals of 'political' nationalism discussed in its opening parts.

To retrieve autonomy, the FN proposed a number of measures involving liberation from foreign dominance and the introduction of policies that would restore Europe's independence. For example, starting from the principle that Europe could not be 'a Soviet



colony reduced to slavery’, Le Pen identified the need to ‘pursue European irredentism’ by opposing the measures taken in Yalta and Helsinki (Le Pen 1984; see also Lang 1987). The following year, these principles were further restated in this passage in the 1985 programmatic book *‘Pour la France: Jean-Marie Le Pen présente le programme du FN’*, where Le Pen identifies the steps needed to return autonomy to Europe:

#### GIVE ITS FREEDOM BACK TO EUROPE

Faced with the Soviets’ subversive will and their use of revolutionary, Muslim fundamentalism, Europe must defend its freedom, like it did in the battles of Marathon, Salamis, the battle of the Catalonian plains, in Poitiers, in Lepanto, in Vienna.

She cannot separate her destiny from that of the captive nations of Eastern Europe. Are they not destined to be an integral part of Europe?

Finally, for Germany to be reunited one day without falling prey to the temptation of being united under the authority of Moscow, it is necessary to do everything to moor Western Germany to the Western Community. (Le Pen 1985: 190)

Beyond identifying Liberty as an objective to pursue, the passage above is also interesting because it highlights the way in which the different concepts that make up the far right’s understanding of Europe can interact. In this case, the passage addresses Liberty, but it also ties it in with the concept of Identity discussed previously (particularly by reclaiming the need for a united Europe) and with a concept that will be discussed in the following chapter: the notion of Threat. Europe, in this sense, must reunite and defend its Liberty from treacherous others such as the Soviet Union and Muslim fundamentalists.

Ensuring collective security was a second means through which the FN hoped to achieve European autonomy in the 1980s. A common defence, in fact, appeared as an essential aspect of autonomy and was mentioned in the party’s early programmatic documents (e.g., Le Pen 1984, Le Pen 1985). As with the MSI, the FN considered that a European defence would need to be linked to the Atlantic Alliance but should also be more European in nature, as the following passage illustrates:

The Atlantic Alliance remains a necessity, but the main issue is to understand until what point friendship can turn against itself and become servility. Because differences in strategic interests remain with the Strategic Defence Initiative for example [...]

Thus, Europe will have to be “pro-European” or will not be: it is better to risk periodical frictions with our great allies than to give up altogether to a collective resignation. Europe’s way to the control of its own destiny remains narrow, but it is the one that must be resolutely taken if we still want to count on the eve of the 21st century. (Le Pen 1986)

Thus, if the Front National accepted the necessity of NATO as a means to ensure protection from the Soviets, there was also the recognition that Europe should be able to protect its own security if it was to restore its autonomy and escape the humiliation of having ‘350 million Europeans asking 230 million Americans to defend them from 270 million Soviets’ (Mégret 1986, cited in FN 1989: 59). The restoration of autonomy through defence was also entwined with a concern for power, as Mégret highlighted when claiming that ‘[t]he Europeans have not yet understood that Europe will be free only if it is powerful’ (1987). This point, however, will be discussed further when addressing the notions of power and ‘rayonnement’.

As for the concept of Identity, the Front National’s positions started pivoting at the end of the 1980s, with the EU increasingly becoming the subject of attacks. Following the emergence of a ‘New World Order’ and the exponential growth in the powers of the European Union that started with the Single European Act and continued through the Maastricht, Amsterdam, Nice and Lisbon treaties, the FN shifted its focus away from reclaiming ‘European autonomy’ and brought the theme of Liberty as domestic self-rule front and centre. Thus, it developed its trademark critique of the EU as a construction stifling domestic sovereignty, defined in the 2002 manifesto as ‘the collective form of liberty: the freedom of a people to decide about its future, that which is also known as independence, the freedoms of individuals to live in the framework of laws they have consented to’ (FN 2002).

The Front National’s radical critique of the EU through the prism of democracy and self-rule is built around two axes: that the EU is a body that shifts power away from the nation through encroachment and a questionable institutional architecture; and, as a result, that it is deeply unrepresentative of popular claims. The concept of Liberty is thus redeployed to oppose the European construction and redefine it as a threat to the nation’s ability to pass whatever measures it considers appropriate.

If we start with the first axis of critique, the party’s 2004 Euromanifesto offers a good illustration of the Front National’s opposition to the EU on grounds of institutional

design and encroachment. Prepared in the context of the European elections of 2004, the manifesto claims that

a nation's sovereignty is its ability to take decisions freely and for itself. It refers then to the notions of independence and exercise of political power by a legitimate government.

The entire history of the European construction consists of depriving States of their sovereignty. Firstly, because Europe has seen its areas of intervention becoming larger, to the point that today they cover the whole of the economic, social, and political spheres. Then, because the organisation and functioning of the European institutions, as well as their decision-making, tend more and more to lead the notion of Nation-State itself to disappear and to entrust power to technocrats in Brussels. (FN 2004)

The passage is helpful because it opens with a definition of national sovereignty that focuses on the aspect of self-rule, before explaining how the EU fundamentally violates this principle through its design and workings. Encroachment, as the passage suggests, expands the powers of the EU at the expense of the member states, potentially limiting their ability to take decisions freely. Its functioning, on the other side, tends to bypass the nation and empower 'technocrats' with no visible national allegiances or democratic legitimacy.

The link between encroachment and limits to self-rule is exemplified more clearly by Jean-Marie Le Pen in a campaign speech from 2007, where the then leader expressed the feeling that the centre of decision-making had 'quit the Elysée and Matignon to install itself in the European quarter of Brussels' (Le Pen 2007), leaving France without much control over its own destiny. As the same speech detailed it further:

They know that we no longer decide anything by ourselves, that all is decided elsewhere, most often against us, against our interests, against our traditions and our values. We no longer decide of our own laws, they are made in Brussels. We no longer decide by ourselves who comes in and out of our country [...]. We no longer decide what goods come into our country because there are no commercial barriers. We no longer decide by ourselves on our economic policies, because we no longer have a national currency, no more budgetary and monetary room for manoeuvre, no right to lead any industrial policy. We no longer have the right to make, by ourselves, our labour law, our commercial law, our environmental laws.

So let's say it, distinctively, clearly, high and loud: Europe has been a market of fools, in which we have received, in exchange for our sacrifices, hammering blows on our face. (Le Pen 2007)

Le Pen here makes a rather exhaustive list of the ways in which the EU limits the political sovereignty of its member states, making it increasingly unfeasible for them to exert self-rule. In addition, there is a clear sense in which this is done against the interests of the nation, which ends up receiving 'hammering blows' to its face instead of the purported advantages of membership.

The opposition to the EU's impingement on each of the types of sovereignty named above appears in several other places, with legal sovereignty and, increasingly since the introduction of the euro, economic sovereignty occupying a particularly central role. Both, in addition, also allow for a more thorough critique of political classes in general, drawing on populist tropes. Thus, for example, the loss of legal sovereignty is associated with a critique of the national political class, which merely 'translates directives from Brussels' and is 'reduced to the level of translators for laws coming from elsewhere' (Langlois 2014), while the loss of economic sovereignty feeds into discourse about the 'global elites' and the dominance of economic power over national decision making.

In the eyes of the party, the legislative procedures and institutional design of the European Union also do nothing to mitigate the effects of encroachment. Elements such as harmonisation, for example, further limit the nation's ability to set its own rules by forcing 'one size fits all' measures to all EU member states, a view well captured in the following passage from an '*orientation*' article in *La Lettre de Jean-Marie Le Pen*:

[...] harmonisation, that is the guiding principle of the Brussels technocrats. In their globalist view, the 20,000 European civil servants want to harmonise everything and do so in an authoritarian and systematic way. While the French Parliament votes on average 120 times a year, the Commission in Brussels enacts some 8,200 judicial acts, a real judicial flood! And everything goes through it, to the point that in some areas, integration is more advanced between European countries than between the states of the United States of America. Consider that the death penalty is abolished because of a European provision, while in the USA the states are sovereign and some apply it while others have abolished it. (Mégret 1989b)

This 'authoritarian' and 'systematic' homogenisation that limits national self-rule by imposing thousands of rules is further problematised, with reference to who makes the laws, when Mégret refers with some suspicion to the 'Brussels technocrat', a figure that occupies a special place in the party's imaginary of Europe. Brussels technocrats (also referred to as 'Brussels bureaucrats'), in fact, are often depicted by the party as suspicious, rootless figures, unrepresentative of the 'true people'.

The result of the empowerment of the EU and the 'Brussels bureaucrats' feeds into the second line of criticism of the EU as a body that is deeply unrepresentative of popular claims and even opposed to recognising them. Concerns over self-rule here merge with considerations on democracy and further develop the party's criticism of the EU on grounds of Liberty. Thus, Brussels is accused of pushing for the ultimate demise of national democracy, with popular sovereignty being replaced by 'expert' decision making (FN 1999) or, even worse, by external domination by the 'EUSSR'. As Bruno Gollnisch put it in a speech:

These are the different steps by which the European Soviet Union is formed: an ensemble whose leaders are not picked by the people and are often unknown to them, meaning that they cannot control or revoke them, and who however tend to rule over all the domains of political, economic and social life [...]

This totalitarian evolution does not go without resistance, but resistance, even when it has the law on its side, is systematically hidden, bypassed, despised. Thus, for example, on 29 May 2005, with 15 million and a half votes, the French people, in large majority, and against the political will of 90% of the political class, said no to the European Constitution, no to the disappearance of France, no to a Eurocratic Super-State over which people have no control, no to the obscure forces of globalism, no to the dictatorship of abject interests of anonymous and stray finance, no to the euro-globalist policies that ruin our economies, our jobs, and our purchasing power. (Gollnisch 2008)

The passage above elucidates some of the most problematic features of the European construction in the view of the Front National and highlights how concerns about sovereignty and self-rule slowly became ones about 'democracy' more broadly, mostly via a negative critique of the European Union's non-democratic procedures. The comparison between the EU and a totalitarian state here is telling, as it exhumes the FN's anti-communism and restyles it in a new way, all the while adding new populist tropes

via the introduction of a stark division between ‘the people’ and the ‘unelected elite’. In addition, it manages to also cast the elected elite as illegitimate, by highlighting the level of disconnect between ‘90% of the political class’ and the ‘large majority’ of French voters who rejected the European Constitution. Finally, although this will be discussed further in the next chapter, it brings forward the idea that there are ‘external enemies’ and obscure forces at work to endanger the nation’s liberty, its democracy and its prosperity.

While the speech above is from a single member of the Front National, and a particularly anti-EU one at that, many of the points Gollnisch raises are present elsewhere, including the division between the people and the elite, the idea that the national political class is somewhat contributing to ‘selling off’ the nation or simply uncaring of what constituents really want (see for example, Mégret 1989a, Salagnac 1992, Le Pen 2010), and the overwhelming sense of danger that looms over the nation (see Chapter five). All these elements lead the FN to reclaim sovereignty for the nation (a regular theme in party programs and one which has survived two leadership changes), because, as Jean-Marie Le Pen puts it, ‘no good is more precious than independence, the collective manifestation of the collective liberty of peoples’ (Le Pen 2004).

The sections so far have focused on how the FN employed the concept of Liberty to discuss questions concerning core state powers; however, it pays to briefly note that, in the eyes of the FN, discussions of Liberty also encompassed more practical considerations about self-sufficiency and the ability to ‘take care of one’s own’. This more economic concern about the ability to survive without relying on external support was mostly mobilised in opposition to the European Union from the 1990s onwards and remained relevant in the 2000s, with issues such as the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), deindustrialisation and economic protectionism dominating the discussion.

The example of the CAP is particularly telling, as it touches deeply on ‘food sovereignty’ and alimentary self-sufficiency, but also entails more identity-driven concerns about ‘*déracinement*’. Thus, the Front National vocally opposed (and still opposes) the CAP on grounds that it destroyed agriculture, rural spaces and, along with other phenomena such as liberalisation and the exponential rise in the number of trade agreements, led to dependence on the outside world. This passage from the 2012 programme summarises the issues nicely and can be considered in agreement with positions expressed in the two previous decades on the CAP:

With the progressive drift of the CAP, the enlargements of the EU and even more since the introduction of the Lisbon Treaty in 2010, France completely lost control of its agricultural policy, then of its food exports, in favour of a bureaucratic and ultra-liberal globalist Europe [...]

France cannot continue to abdicate its sovereignty in this sector without endangering its national interest. Since the Europe of Brussels is incapable of freeing itself of the globalist constraint, we must draw our conclusions. (FN 2012a)

While considering the EU as a threat to self-sufficiency in recent years, it should however be noted that the Front National's position has been somewhat ambiguous in this area in the past. In fact, although the EU has been considered as a threat to prosperity and has been criticised in the past as limiting economic freedoms and competition by imposing excessive laws, it was, at least in the early 1990s, also considered as a potentially positive body if adapted to become a closed continental market in which an intelligent form of protectionism could be pursued (see for example Mégret 1992, 1997: 228-229). In this sense, it also represented a way to ensure self-sufficiency, although this hope faded with time, leaving the EU as a limit to self-sufficiency.

## THE QUEST FOR POWER: THE EUROPEAN MISSION

The previous sections showed how the MSI/AN and FN mobilised ideas of Liberty as autonomy and self-rule to further define Europe and insert it in their ideological schemata. It stressed how in the 1980s, the MSI and FN spoke about the need for Europe to retrieve its autonomy and get rid of negative external influences. It also showed that, while the MSI paid little attention to questions of democracy and self-rule when defining Europe, the AN referred to them mostly as part of a discussion concerning the division of power between the EU and its member states. By contrast, from the mid-1980s onwards, the FN mobilised the notions of self-rule and democracy against the European Union, claiming that the latter violated them through its design and its political practices.

In addition to thinking of Europe as a space that should retrieve autonomy, the MSI/AN and FN also considered that Europe's Liberty should travel beyond its borders. Europe, in this sense, should not only be autonomous, but also free to project power, express its 'freedom of will' in the external realm and influence the world around it. Echoing narratives of European missions and white men's burdens, the MSI/AN and FN

thus further drew on this idea of Liberty to define what was in Europe's nature to do. This section shows how they have done so by discussing these ideas of external power and 'rayonnement', considering the expansive idea of Liberty as a form of 'will of power' and external influence, and detailing the role of Europe in projecting power and reinforcing (or not) the nation's external power.

#### A CONTINENT WITH A PLAN: THE MSI AND EUROPE'S 'SECULAR MISSION'

The notion of power characterised both the MSI and the FN's understanding of Europe. In fact, both the MSI and its successor party viewed Europe as a source of power and vehicle for external influence. While interpreting the nature of this power differently, they saw Europe as having some kind of 'mission' in the world which required it to intervene beyond its own borders and project power externally. In short, its nature was to be free to express its will in the outer world.

The MSI's notion of a European 'secular mission' (Romualdi 1979: 17) was rooted in their understanding of the continent's history. While viewing Europe as currently in decline and having lost its leading place in the world as a force acting for civilisation, the party claimed the need for Europe to retrieve its glorious influence. The results of the European mission, as well as its future, were well captured by Pino Romualdi in his *'Intervista sull'Europa'* when he spoke of Europe's mission as

a secular mission, certainly not free from mistakes and cruelty, but that cannot keep being considered as a crime, a disgusting sin [...] which one must make amends for through inconceivable concessions in all fields to countries and people still or in good part incapable of the great cultural, moral and political commitments and of those of the development of the human conditions of their peoples, in the respect and defence of the fundamental values of civilisation. A civilising endeavour which Europeans and the whole Western world need to be proud of in terms of what it represented concretely for the growth of the idea of liberty and feeling of national independence [...] in territories and between populations otherwise destined to remain for centuries or millennia in a backward state. (Romualdi 1979: 17)

Romualdi's vision here expresses a few familiar ideas. First of all, underlying the entire paragraph is the view of European civilisation as superior to all other civilisations, as highlighted by the view that countries colonised by Europeans would have otherwise



remained for ‘centuries or millennia in a backward state’. Secondly, however, and more importantly for this idea of external power, is the will to reclaim that heritage which, while not ‘free from mistakes’, should not stop Europe from fulfilling its role in educating and developing those parts of the world in which the fundamental values of civilisation have not been fully acquired. Interestingly for the purposes of this chapter, Europe’s main contribution comes in the form of ‘the growth of the idea of liberty and feeling of national independence’, confirming the central place that such ideas have in the party’s definition of Europe.

The recognition of a European mission thus led the MSI to view Europe’s natural role as that of a great power, a ‘Third Position’ between the USA and the USSR which should ‘express its will in the international scene’ (MSI 1980: 25) and ‘return to be a protagonist in the world’ (MSI 1982c). Liberty as power, in this sense, served both to characterise Europe’s nature and define its future role.

In the MSI’s case, the notion of power also came through in the criticism of the European Union. In particular, this distinctive view of Europe as a potential great power with a secular mission informed a critique of the EU based on the idea that it did not permit fulfilment of this mission. Romualdi already lamented that part of the problem with Europe’s lack of external power lay in the fact that the EU had not been built with the political idea of becoming a great power at its heart (1979: 23). The following citation by the then leader of the youth branch of the MSI (FUAN) and subsequently MP, Maurizio Gasparri, summarises well the MSI’s criticism of the European Community in this area, as well as its view for Europe:

A united Europe can be a protagonist, strengthened by its culture, traditions [...] Our path [...] will be long and hard. We will run into hostility and incomprehension. But we know that it is the right way, the only one that Europe can follow if it wants to return to thinking big, if it wants to build a future of political, military and cultural autonomy, if it wants to measure up with its great past. It is a “long march” that awaits us. We must face it because we are the only ones who are aware of this, that do not mistake a deal on legal tenders or on passports for an historical change. We need more! Our Nations alone cannot compare with the great empires. A common policy and a common defence are a binding necessity. We must launch ideas and projects against cultural colonisation, against military subjection, against the ploys of economic power, to defend a spiritual conception of life, to

defend the historical memory and the roots of our peoples, to use the economic resources to serve a great political design [...] that will not be able to ignore social problems, and employment first among them, to seize back history. To return to making history, not being subject to it! (Gasparri 1988)

Written in the years leading up to Maastricht, the document is interesting in that it highlights the party's scepticism towards the EU's merely economic and symbolic deals. This is a common line of criticism of the MSI, which throughout its history considered that economic union was only a step towards a 'political Europe' (see for example MSI 1990c), by which they meant an EU with a strong foreign policy component. The document above also details the MSI's view of the necessity for this more 'political' Europe, considered as a corollary to the return of autonomy to the continent and to its 'civilising mission' in the world. In other words, Gasparri here claims that Europe needs to be great again, if it is to compete with the great empires and return to 'making history'.

This commitment to European power translated into concrete policy positions to bring about a 'political Europe' which could project influence in the world. First, it fed into the previously discussed view of the need for a European defence and a more balanced relationship with NATO. In addition, and consistent with the MSI's claim for the need to establish a 'political Europe', the party advocated the establishment of a common foreign policy for the European Union. The party in fact considered that all Italian foreign policy would have to be founded on 'that great civic and historical reality called Europe' (MSI 1984); or, as the 1987 programme highlighted, Europe would need

a common foreign policy: that will face the issues of the worsening of the international situation, that will place the single European states in a situation of parity, in condition to defend themselves, revoking limitations, discriminations and privileges; that will make Europe in the Western block, in the fullness of its rights, determinant in the choices for peace and security, for the function that she deserves in the world, in political and economic projection, especially in the Mediterranean, the Third World and Latin America. (MSI 1987d)

The passage above ties together several of the considerations about 'power' and Europe brought forward in previous parts of this chapter: the need to restore European autonomy and rebalance relations with the USA, the return to a prominent role in international relations for Europe, and the need for Europe to 'project' itself in the world and build relations with other countries. It also allows, however, to add one final observation

concerning the MSI's commitment to this 'political Europe', namely, the extent to which it was self-interested.

The MSI, in fact, was not simply a disinterested supporter of European power, but rather a supporter of European policy with a strong Italian component to it. The geographical focus of the MSI's political Europe, in particular, was heavily influenced by its hope to be able to restore Italy's influence in Europe. In the case of Latin America, the MSI hoped that Italy would be able to play a role thanks to its numerous immigrant communities (a recurrent theme in party documents). The Mediterranean focus, on the other hand, was intimately related to another core issue for the party: the Italian Mezzogiorno (the MSI's main electoral constituency), and the hope to contribute to its development by shifting the focus of politics and Europe from a Northern to a Southern perspective. In this sense, European power was a vehicle to pursue the European mission, but also a way to pursue national goals and restore Italy's own power.

#### SOFT POWER EUROPE: ALLEANZA NAZIONALE'S REFRAMING OF EUROPEAN POWER

Power remained a relevant concept in the definition of Europe for AN, although it ceased to refer to an 'expansionist' project based on superiority of European culture and shifted to a commitment more in line with mainstream discourses on the European Union's 'soft power'. AN thus moderated its view of power, removing its hierarchical characteristics, while remaining committed to the idea that Europe in the shape of the EU had some mission to fulfil in the world.

Evidence of AN's moderation in terms of its understanding of power was already evident in the Fiuggi theses which marked the party's transition from 'neo-fascism' to 'post-fascism' (although in its early phases, the difference between the two was moderate at best, see Griffin 1996, Ignazi 2003: 46, Tarchi 2003). While maintaining some elements of the old MSI, the theses also marked a shift in terms of embracing a less hierarchical vision of the relationship between Europe and the world. Thus, in the 1995 theses, the newly created AN insisted on some traditional themes of the MSI, such as pursuing the objective of giving weight to the 'Great Europe' by strengthening the European pillar of NATO and ensuring that the fall of Communism in central and eastern Europe did not distract from the need for a Mediterranean policy and a stronger focus on the Middle East,

MSI staples that will remain throughout the AN's lifespan. However, it also predicated a role for Europe in international development, 'encouraging a cooperation aimed at self-centred development of the beneficiary countries, the selection of credible political classes in the Third World, the education of the technical and managerial personnel that can manage long-term projects in developing countries, [and] renegotiating the debt accumulated by poor Countries' (1995: 48). While, as highlighted before, ideas of helping the development of the Third World had already been present in the MSI, it is notable to remark how they are shed here of some of their most problematic assumptions of European superiority.

This gradual shift to a 'soft-power' project continued in subsequent years, at first remaining rather faithful to old lines, but then integrating them with new commitments. Thus, if the 1999 manifesto highlighted the need for political union and a common foreign policy to restore Europe's power in the external realm (AN 1999), later documents coupled this with concerns such as human rights, human dignity, stability and prosperity, including a call in 2000 for different relationships with totalitarian countries that violate them (AN 2000). This brought AN's notion of power broadly in line with that of the EU, all the while reassessing the notion that Europe had a mission to fulfil in the world. Thus, rather than leading to the disappearance of power in the definition of Europe, it merely altered its meaning in a more acceptable way.

If the notion of power changed, AN's commitment to establishing Europe as a force to be reckoned with and to reinstating it in history did not. Thus, the party kept employing the notion of power to decontest Europe, albeit drawing on a 'softer' definition of it. The permanence of this commitment to a powerful Europe is evident in the following passage from an article in which former politician Riccardo Pedrizzi, reflecting on institutional reform for the EU claimed that

more Europe means pushing the European Union towards a shared and recognised destiny as a great geopolitical actor, as an actor that cannot delegate to others the responsibilities that history has given it. [...]

However the starring role of the subcontinents, Indian and Chinese, and the end of the bipolar division of East-West, should push the European Nations towards the construction of a strong and united political subject [...]

Given these experiences and in the presence of such

changes of perspectives, it is necessary to start a new season of institutional reforms to relaunch the debate on the idea of European unity, aware that it will be necessary to safeguard the identity, exalting their roots, of the single peoples and of all the nations. Starting from the belief that only a cohesive and united continent will be able to perform the leading role in the upcoming times. (Pedrizzi 2006)

To sum up, both the MSI and the AN had a strong sense of the ‘historical mission’ of Europe and its need to project power in the external realm so as to ensure balance in the world. Thus, the concept of Liberty as power was essential in their ideology of Europe, in so far as it is through the prism of power that they understood its past, its nature and its future mission. While for the MSI this was bound up with a strongly hierarchical view of relations between Europe and the rest of the world, this was mitigated in the discourse of the AN which, while broadly maintaining the same policy objectives and the willingness to engage Europe in the world, appeared to do so more on the basis of a collaboration with other countries and the willingness to promote ‘universal’ values such as human rights and human dignity. In this, it appeared to be broadly in line with the stated aims of the EU’s relations with the world (see for example, article 2 of the Lisbon Treaty), highlighting the extent to which AN became ‘mainstream’ in its positions.

#### ‘L’EUROPE SERA IMPÉRIALE OU NE SERA PAS’: THE LIMITED ROLE OF EUROPEAN POWER IN THE FRONT NATIONAL

The FN, like the MSI, viewed power as an ideal to be pursued by Europe. Like the Italian party, it claimed the need for Europe to have power because this would allow it to be truly autonomous and fulfil its historical, civilising mission. However, it also accorded less importance to the notion than the MSI/AN did. In particular, the use of the notion of power to define Europe was time-bound and limited to the period between the second half of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, as the result of an opposition to the increasingly economic direction taken by European integration.

The FN’s considerations on power and Europe started from a similar place as those of the MSI. Like the MSI, the FN viewed Europe as a power in decline, but with the potential to recover its righteous place in the world. Le Pen summarised this state of affairs in his 1984 book when he said that ‘Europe retreats, and civilisation and liberty retreat with it; Europe is no longer Europe because it has resigned itself to not being the

world' (1984: 164). This single sentence captures both the feeling of European decline as well as the assessment that this is problematic, because the retreat of Europe has negative implications for 'civilisation and liberty'.

Underlying the passage above, as well as the FN's view more broadly, was also the idea that Europe had some form of 'historical mission' to make the world more European, a mission that its decline did not allow it to pursue. This was further stressed a few years later by Bruno Mégret (cited in FN 1989), when he exhorted, 'let us [Europeans] stop announcing everywhere in the world that we have no design to expand, let us stop behaving like guilty and assisted parties'. Just as for the MSI, then, there was a view of Europe as a civilisation 'in retreat', made to feel guilty by other parties, but which should, on the contrary, reclaim its heritage and acquire a more active role in the world in the name of its clear superiority. In other words, Europe should exert power in the external realm because it is in its nature, and its duty, to do so.

But why was power so important for the FN, and why should Europe have had it? Power, as Mégret (1987) put it, was essential because, in a similar way to autonomy, it allowed one to 'be a master of one's own fate' (*maîtriser son destin*, Mégret 1987). This did not apply exclusively to the nation in his view but also needed to be an attribute of Europe, as the following passage from the FN's *Passeport pour la victoire*, a short booklet detailing the party's organisation and positions, including a number of 'memorable quotes' associated with key partisan issues, illustrates:

One cannot build a true community except by affirming oneself as autonomous and different compared to others. Let us state clearly what objective the European construction must pursue. For us, it is [a] triple [objective]: firstly, power; secondly, power; thirdly, power.

Power, because without power, Europe will lose its independence, its identity and will cease to be a master of her own fate.

Power, because power is life and nations are like living beings: if they are not expanding, they are regressing.

Power, because, without it, nothing great can be done [...]  
(FN 1989)

Extracted from a speech given by Mégret in the French parliament at the time of the debates on the Single European Act and reproduced in the *Passeport*, this passage is worth

dissecting because it helps tease out the links between Liberty and Europe. Presenting an alternative, non-economic form of development for the EU, underlying the entire passage, is the idea that a nation or continent which is not powerful cannot be free, as it is always going to depend on others to preserve its autonomy. This leads Mégret to assert the need for a European construction endowed with 'puissance': firstly, because it is the only way for the European community to be 'a master of its own fate'; secondly, because power allows nations to expand; and thirdly, because only power allows for great accomplishments. The first point is rather familiar, and points towards the fact that there can be no autonomy unless there is also the ability to defend oneself from the outer world. The second point is more interesting and points towards this 'expansionary' view of Liberty as a means to project one's will onto others. Thus, only an expanding body can be truly free, not only because it is free from external influence, but also, because it is free to express its will abroad and influence others. The final point is a consequence of this, and goes back to the idea of Europe as a force acting for civilisation: unless it is powerful, the European community cannot hope to repeat the great things Europe has done in the past and continue acting for civilisation as it should. Power, hence, becomes a constitutive part of Europe, as the *sine qua non* for true autonomy, as a Europe which cannot express itself outside its own borders cannot be truly free.

While the argument that Mégret brought forward in the previous passage pushed for a more powerful European Union, it should also be noted that it was not entirely unselfish or aimed at the construction of a federal Europe. In the bipolar world of the 1980s, and the unipolar one of the early 1990s, the FN was unsure about the individual nation's ability to exert power by themselves, although they also thought that France was stronger than others, and hence better placed to act as a guide for everyone else. As a result, Europe was seen as a necessary 'means for the Nation States to find together the power they have lost during the fratricidal wars they engaged in and that they asked the USA and the USSR to arbitrate' (FN 1991: 118). The idea of power was also selected as key to the project of European unity because it was the only principle that 'respects the identity and sovereignty of European nations' (Le Pen 1995: 41; see also FN 1993). Thus, power became central to the construction of Europe on one hand, as a marker of its collective freedom, but also as a means to protect the internal freedom of the individual member states, embodied by the ideas of sovereignty and identity mentioned in the passage above.

The following decades marked a fall in the discourse of power in relation to Europe, especially after the departure of Bruno Mégret, one of the architects of the party's position on European power. The concept notably disappeared from the party's ideology of Europe after 1997, only to reappear, in a new fashion, in Marine Le Pen's 2012 programme (FN 2012a). In a striking parallel with what happened with autonomy, when Marine Le Pen reconsidered Europe and power, its relationship with Europe was redefined: it was no longer question of 'European power' but of 'France's power' which was being limited by the EU; or, to be even more specific, by a political class that was 'subjugated' by a globalist ideology and that reduced France's foreign policy to the European horizon by aligning it with the United States. Thus, it was no longer a question of creating a European power as an alternative to the European Union, but rather of re-establishing the power of the individual nation vis-à-vis the EU.

As with the previous chapter, this chapter has highlighted a number of differences in the parties' use of Liberty which it is worth briefly discussing before moving on to the next section. In particular, it noted the following areas of divergence: the disappearance of the focus on European autonomy in AN and the FN, coupled with different positions on questions of (democratic) self-rule; and the permanence of notions of power (albeit in a 'soft' form) in AN, as opposed to the FN.

Three plausible explanations for these divergences may be mentioned: one focusing on context, a second one on ideological aspects, and the third one on strategic objectives. As far as context goes, the Cold War and the European Union's changes between the 1980s and 1990s could explain the disappearance of calls for European autonomy. Thus, while in the 1980s the autonomy of Europe may have appeared as endangered, this was no longer the case in the 1990s, explaining why it disappeared from AN and the FN's ideology of Europe. At the same time, the evolution of the EU following the Maastricht Treaty raised questions about the extent to which it would curtail autonomy, leading the FN to shift its positions towards opposing the EU on grounds of domestic self-rule. The broad changes that occurred between the end of the 1980s and the early 1990s do not, however, explain why the MSI and later AN did not turn against the EU in the same way the FN did, an element also noted in the previous chapter. In fact, while the MSI did criticise the Maastricht Treaty (and voted against it), its critique of it was not primarily built around concerns about autonomy or self-rule, but around the



notion that the presence of opt outs did not create a level playing field, and that Maastricht engraved on Europe a certain (economic) idea with which the party disagreed (AN 1994a).

Ideological elements such as different views on the relative power of their nations and differing attitudes towards the democratic system prove more useful to understanding why the parties diverged. When it comes to the size of the nation, it pays to note that the MSI and AN did not seem to view participation in the EU as a zero sum game in which growing EU powers would lessen the nation, but rather as a process that could enhance the nation's power. The MSI and AN were, in fact, aware of Italy's status as a 'medium-size power', and may have felt as a result that the EU did not really restrict autonomy or self-rule, or that there was a valid trade-off between autonomy and increased power which justified their continued engagement with the project. This also aids the understanding of why concerns about power remained more relevant to them than they did to the FN: the MSI/AN was never sure that Italy could make it on its own, so they tried to maintain its relevance through Europe. The FN, on the other side, viewed France as a great power and natural leader in Europe, making them less willing to accept trade-offs and more confident, especially from the 1990s onwards, about the country's ability to make it on its own.

The parties' different attitudes towards the democratic system, on the other hand, could explain variations in the levels of concern with democracy. Here it is worth returning to the distinction between 'old' 'extreme right' parties and 'new' 'radical right parties' (Hainsworth 2008: 8-9, Ignazi 2003: 25-34), which might help explain why the MSI was never too concerned about democracy, seeing the established democratic order as an imperfect one. In contrast, AN and the FN accepted the existing order and could therefore more credibly include democracy in their ideology of Europe, albeit in different ways. For the FN, this can also be seen as the result of their populist features, which led them to place focus the democratic self-rule of 'the (national) people' against a corrupt and unelected (Euroglobalist) 'elite'.

Finally, it is also possible that the MSI/AN did not turn to outright opposition to the EU because there were no strategic incentives to do so. In this case, one could argue that the parties' ideology could have been 'tweaked' if they thought it might be helpful to increase their vote share or relevance. However, the MSI/AN worked in the context of a broadly EU-positive public opinion, where Euroscepticism would not have paid a

particularly high dividend (Quaglia 2008: 60). Turning to Euroscepticism, as a result, was unlikely to lend them any votes and may have even alienated a part of their electorate used to a positive approach to the EU, carrying costs in terms of credibility. Furthermore, for a party in search of respectability as AN was in the early 1990s, anti-EU positions might have signalled an anti-establishment attitude incompatible with a ‘coalitionable’ and legitimate party (on this, see Vasilopoulou 2018a).

These different factors could have plausibly had a role in explaining what happened. Further research may want to focus on their interactions and relative weight, but for the time being it is pertinent to return to the main objectives of this thesis and specifically, to reflecting on the implications of the parties’ use of Liberty to decontest Europe.

## LIBERTY AS A SHARED CONCEPT: REVISITING NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN NARRATIVES

The sections so far have sought to show how the MSI/AN and FN drew on the concept of Liberty to further define their positions on the European Union. They have shown that the parties defined Europe both as a place that needed to be free and the European Union as a limitation to that freedom. This section delves deeper into the implications of this argument by addressing two aspects: first, the increased focus it brings to questions of Liberty; and second, the extent to which these ideas of Liberty are exclusively far right. The contention advanced here is that the inclusion of Europe via the concept of Liberty may have brought more attention to an aspect of far right ideology that is broadly shared with other political actors.

Starting from the first point, it is possible to argue that the integration of Europe in far right ideology through the concept of Liberty may have altered the balance between the concepts of Identity and Liberty, bringing the latter into a more visible position. In fact, while both ‘boundary-building’ and ‘political’ aspects of nationalism matter to the far right, the former seems to have more prominence in their ideology and manifests itself in a variety of their flagship policies, such as opposition to immigration or their intense attachment to the nation itself. However, the inclusion of European issues in the parties’ ideology, within the context of a divided Europe and, afterwards, an increasingly political

EU, may have indeed forced them to dedicate more space to Liberty, giving it more prominence in the ideology as a whole.

Beyond altering the balance between concepts, the fact that the EU is a moving target also means that its evolutions can trigger changes in the ways in which concepts are interpreted and employed. This was perhaps most evident in the Front National's responses to the Maastricht Treaty and the way in which it engendered a shift in the usage of Liberty by anchoring it to ideas of self-rule, rather than to the alternative interpretation of Liberty as power. This suggests that, while the understanding and positions expressed on Europe are guided by nationalism, the inclusion of Europe necessarily provokes adjustments that shape the overall structure of the ideology and the individual meaning of the concepts used to decontest it.

Importantly, however, it should be noted that, in spite of their shifting meanings, notions of Liberty have been consistently present in the parties' ideology of Europe, whether in one form or another. While the individual meanings associated with it have tended to shift over time and, as discussed in the chapter, in relation to changes in context and the developments of the European Union itself, the conceptual realm has remained broadly the same. This highlights a certain level of consistency and continuity in the far right's ideology of Europe.

In addition to altering the shape of far right ideology and certain concepts within it, the increased focus brought to questions of Liberty may have the effect of stressing elements that are not exclusive to these parties, but which are shared more widely across the polity. In fact, the concept of Liberty as well as its individual understandings studied so far are not specifically far right, but rather part of a broader tradition of thinking about the nation and Europe. Thus, while being part of the far right's ideology, they are not exclusive to it or developed externally to national and European traditions.

Two examples should help highlight these similarities: on one hand, the parallel between the role of Liberty as a collective form of autonomy and self-rule in the parties' definition of Europe, and the central role played by sovereignty in the definition of the State; and on the other, the analogies between their vision of European power and the EU's self-understanding.

On the first count, the attentive reader will have noted that, while the thesis does not use the term 'sovereignty' in an attempt to mirror the parties' language, the notions

of autonomy and self-rule largely retrace the internal and external facets of national sovereignty. Internal sovereignty corresponds most clearly to the idea of self-rule, suggesting that ‘the state has the absolute power to make decisions on every aspect of human life’ (Troper 2012: 354-355); whereas, external sovereignty can be defined as indicating that the state is ‘independent of every other external power’ (Troper 2012: 354-355), and hence autonomous, as our parties would have it. Sovereignty, as Troper also points out, while remaining contested in several empirical and theoretical terms, remains a central concept in constitutional law and discourse, and is thus heavily embedded as a core part of politics (2012: 351).<sup>18</sup>

National sovereignty, in fact, is far from being a principle that matters exclusively to far right parties. While, given the place the nation occupies in their ideology, it may matter to them more than others, it is also a key principle in the functioning of the state and as a result part of a common way of thinking about the nation. Within the Italian and French context specifically, the relevance of the principle of sovereignty, as well as its nature as an attribute of the nation and not merely of the state, can be inferred by its presence in the opening sections of their Constitutions: the French constitution proclaims an attachment to the principle of ‘national sovereignty’ in the preamble and dedicates its second constitutional article to it, while the Italian constitution consents to limitations of sovereignty ‘in parity with other states’ for the maintenance of peace and justice among nations. As a result, when the parties draw upon these concepts to define Europe and their policies on the EU, they are tapping into widely accepted constitutional principles to advance their claims.

Liberty as power in the external realm, on the other hand, resonates with narratives about European and national ‘missions’. It will be remembered that the MSI, AN and the FN all suggested that Europe and their respective nations had a duty to fulfil in the world. While this claim may be seen as problematic because of its imperialist undertones, it also shares some commonalities with national and EU narratives about what Europe is for, and what its role in the world should be. Thus, for example, the views expressed by the Front National in the 1980s, about France leading a ‘great power’ Europe, appear as

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<sup>18</sup> One might, of course, want to object that sovereignty and the powers associated with it are but a mere legal fiction in an interconnected global order. However, even while admitting that the legal relevance of sovereignty is limited by the international order, its political relevance has not declined, as the most recent discussions on Brexit as a vote about ‘taking back control’ would suggest (see also MacCormick 1993 for an earlier articulation of this argument with respect to Maastricht).

strongly aligned with French perceptions of Europe as ‘France written large’ and the EU as a means to project power lost following decolonisation (Frank 2002).

It is equally possible to find echoes of EU statements in the positions held by the parties in the 1970s and 1980s. For example, it may be worth noting the parallels between the 1970s declaration on European identity which stated that

the Europe of the Nine is aware that, as it unites, it takes on new international obligations. European unification is not directed against anyone, nor is it inspired by a desire for power. On the contrary, the Nine are convinced that their union will benefit the whole international community since it will constitute an element of equilibrium and a basis for co-operation with all countries, whatever their size, culture or social system (European Union 1973)

and our parties’ claims to make Europe an ‘element of equilibrium’ in the world. While the EU declaration arguably rejects the concept of power so keenly espoused by the MSI/AN and FN (an element, however, which suggests that ‘powerful’ is how the EU is commonly perceived), it still expresses similar ideas about its need to take an active role in guaranteeing the international order.

This awareness of a European ‘mission’ remains present in today’s EU, where the Treaty on European Union insists on its role in seeking to advance key values such as ‘democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law’ (Art. 21, European Union 2007). While the MSI/AN and FN no longer use this type of argument, this suggests that the EU maintains a mission to export its values beyond its borders, and project its power in the world. When the parties draw upon such ideas, then, they are drawing on ideas that are already there, and while they present them in a more radical and perhaps unapologetic fashion, they are not acting in a void but reinterpreting and radicalising views that are already in the mainstream.

In short, when far right parties employ Liberty to decontest Europe, they do indeed draw on core concepts in their ideology; but they also align with wider, shared narratives about the nation and Europe. Thus, while maintaining their distinctiveness because they are redeploying core concepts in their ideology, they are also managing to put focus on elements that are not unique to them.

As a matter of conclusion, it is possible to offer a final consideration on what this focus on Liberty may tell us about definitions of the far right more broadly. In particular, the weight of issues of Liberty in the far right's ideology of Europe encourages reflection on the appropriateness of the concept of 'nativism' discussed in the previous chapter by considering what it obscures about the far right's appeal. In particular, the concept does not allow one to capture much about why the 'natives' are so concerned with 'Others', or what the purposes of nationalism more broadly are. While the rejection of the Other certainly has something to do with fear of cultural or racial mixing which would dilute national identity, their positions on Europe suggest that it might also be seen as concerned with more political aspects of nationalism, such as issues of representation and who the beneficiaries of the laws made by the state are. While the lack of focus on this second, political aspect might be warranted by the primacy of the first one, or by the willingness to distinguish between 'good', civic and 'bad' xenophobic nationalism, it is important to note that the far right's ideology of Europe (and most likely their ideology in general) draws on both.

## CONCLUSION

Following the chapter on Identity, this chapter has advanced two further arguments concerning the far right's understanding of Europe. First, it argued that far right parties do not rely exclusively on the concept of Identity to discuss Europe, but also employ the concept of Liberty to further define the meaning of Europe and integrate it in their ideological frames. This was considered as falling in line with the expectation explored in chapter two and the findings of chapter three suggesting that parties redeploy core concepts in their ideology to make sense of new ones. The empirical sections showed how this worked in practice by highlighting how far right parties used the concept of Liberty both to define Europe as a place in need of freedom and, in the case of the FN, as a place that limited such freedom. Table three summarises the meanings associated with the concept and how it was used to decontest Europe.

TABLE 3: SUMMATIVE TABLE OF LIBERTY AND EUROPE

Main concept	Subthemes	Present in		
		MSI	AN	FN
Liberty	<b>Autonomy and self-rule:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Europe as a space that needs to retrieve autonomy (1)</li> <li>• EU as a body that limits autonomy and self-rule (2)</li> <li>• Democracy value that needs to be present in EU (3)</li> </ul>	(1) Dominant in 1980s, present 1990s	(3) Present but infrequent 1990s onwards	(1) Present 1980s, (2) Dominant 1990 onwards
	<b>External power and ‘rayonnement’:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Europe and EU as bodies that must exert power in external realm</li> </ul>	Present 1980s, 1990s	Present 1990s, 2000s	Present 1980s, early 1990s

Second, the chapter suggested that the way in which Europe was decontested through Liberty drew on concepts that are not exclusive to the far right, but rather are part of a broader tradition of thinking about the nation and Europe. This could help the parties appear as more ‘normal’ and embedded in their societies than the term ‘far right’ would suggest.

## 5. STATES OF EMERGENCY: EUROPE UNDER THREAT

Up until now, the thesis has explored the core concepts that the MSI/AN and FN have used to decontest Europe. The two previous chapters have shown that when the studied parties defined Europe, they drew on the concepts of Identity and Liberty to present Europe as a distinct community and as a space defined by ideas of autonomy, self-rule and power. It was suggested that the inclusion of Europe in their ideology through these terms led to an ‘opening’ of the parties’ ideological cores, and to placing an increased focus on elements that are not exclusive to them but shared with other actors as well.

This chapter moves away from the core to the area of adjacency to discuss a third concept that both fleshes out the conceptual core further and helps define the positions of far right parties on the project of European integration: the concept of Threat. Developing the insights of the two previous chapters, it argues that in the MSI and the FN’s ideology (but not AN’s), Europe, its Liberty, its Identity and the lifestyle associated with it are described as endangered by a series of threats which, in time, could lead to the demise of Europe itself and of its nations. The chapter maintains that the effect of this rhetoric of danger is to place Europe in a situation of emergency which helps parties present themselves as prophetic actors.

The argument is developed as follows. The chapter opens by discussing why Threat can be considered an adjacent, but nonetheless rather important, concept in far right ideology. It then proceeds to illustrate how the parties have mobilised it in their definition of Europe by showing how they have presented the continent as endangered by a series of internal, external and diffuse threats. Following this descriptive enterprise, the chapter shows how this constant reference to danger feeds into a ‘politics of emergency’ where far right parties present themselves as the only ones aware of the grave danger Europe is in.



## ANCHORING THE CORE: EUROPE IN DANGER

Drawing on the contention advanced in chapter two that parties would use existing elements in their ideology to integrate new issues into it, the two previous chapters argued that Identity and Liberty were ‘core concepts’ of the far right’s nationalist ideology which were being ‘repurposed’ by the parties to define Europe. This chapter develops this contention, showing how parties have drawn on a third concept to define Europe, namely, the concept of Threat.

Before presenting this concept, it is important to address a question about how ‘far right’ the concepts employed so far have been. While this may appear as a tangential question in principle, it is one that this chapter can help address and should therefore be tackled as a matter of priority.

Following the two previous chapters, a critical reader may feel the need to ask about the extent to which the concepts of Identity and Liberty are specifically far right. They may want to argue that there is nothing particularly far right about them, and that these may be expected to play a role in the ideology of any nationalist party (and potentially even beyond them). They may cite the contention advanced in Chapter four that, in focusing on Liberty, far right parties end up sounding strikingly close to other actors and thus lose their distinctive far right character. They may, in short, want to ask what makes the far right’s ideology of Europe any more far right than, say, the ideology of Europe of any non-far right nationalist party?

Two answers rooted in the morphological approach may be given to the reader’s question, one drawing on the individual meanings of concepts and the other on their assembly. Central to Freeden’s understanding of ideologies is the contention that all ideologies are formed by clusters of concepts, and that all ideologies will employ similar concepts (1998a: 54ff). A concept such as Liberty may be present in liberalism, but also in conservatism or, in our case, nationalism. What gives ideologies their distinctiveness is the way in which concepts are decontested, their relative position in the ideology and the overall selection of concepts being utilised. Thus, Liberty may be understood in a radically different way in liberalism and nationalism, or it may be understood in similar ways but associated with different concepts, giving the ideology as a whole a different ‘shape’. Similarly, a concept such as Equality may be core to socialism, but only marginal

(or even absent) in conservatism, thereby altering its relative weight in the ideology as a whole.

One possible answer to our critical reader's question, then, consists in saying that while the concepts themselves are not particularly far right, the way in which they are decontested and their overall position in the ideology is. The previous chapters have addressed this point when they have claimed, for example, that the far right's Liberty is of a collective type, and that their understanding of Identity is rooted in a closed conception of groups. In this sense, their definition of these concepts, and the way in which they have applied them to Europe, would appear to give them a distinctively far right touch. Their position is equally important because it highlights that these are the concepts around which the rest of the ideology is built.

The second answer to our reader is that what matters is not just the individual presence of the concepts of Identity and Liberty, or the way in which they are decontested and their place, but also their association with other concepts that are more specific to the far right and which may 'anchor' the core in a more distinctive cluster of concepts. This is precisely the role of the concept analysed in this chapter, namely, the concept of Threat.

The concept of Threat refers to the notion that something (or someone) cherished is placed in an unwelcome situation of danger which may, in the most extreme cases, lead to its very disappearance. As such, it involves the identification of something that is valued, of something (or someone) that threatens it and the claim of a negative relationship linking the former and the latter. Who is threatened and who poses a threat and why may change, but the recognition of a Threat will usually require the discussion of such elements.

The concept of Threat may be thought of as an adjacent concept that 'colours' the party family's nationalism.<sup>19</sup> Adjacent concepts are concepts that, while not ubiquitous as core concepts are, have the role of 'finessing the core and anchoring it—at least

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<sup>19</sup> The concept of Threat could credibly be subsumed under an articulation of 'Us versus Them', and therefore as a mere manifestation of the identity-building part of nationalism discussed in Chapter three, however, this thesis treats it as a separate concept. In particular, it considers that reading the concept of Threat as a simple matter of 'Us versus Them' does not make it possible to fully appreciate that Threat often refers to broader phenomena which cannot be imputed to a specific 'them' (e.g., globalisation, social decline etc.). Therefore, while it can lead to scapegoating and what Wodak (2015) calls a 'politics of fear', this reading encapsulates a broader selection of elements than relying on a simple 'Us versus Them' distinction would capture.

temporarily—into a more determinate and decontested semantic field’ (Freeden 2013: 125-126). In this case, the concept anchors the far right’s ideology in a field of emergency, presenting the elements that the far right cares about as constantly endangered. It creates a vision of the world in which politics is not just about policies but about the very survival of the political body. This also results in giving a high prominence not only to the consequences of the Threat, but also to its causes, whether they be material or immaterial. In this sense, it populates far right ideology with dangerous peoples and phenomena which may appear as less relevant in other variants of nationalism.

The importance of this concept in far right parties is often stressed when it comes to analysing their views on ‘Others’ and presenting their nationalism as one that is ‘closed’ to outsiders, whether this closedness be on ethnic or cultural grounds. In fact, the idea of belonging to a group and wanting to express it politically need not imply exclusionary features, as the classic debate opposing the (allegedly) open ‘civic’ versus the closed ‘ethnic’ nationalism shows (Kohn 2005 [1944]). In the case of the far right, however, the closed conception of the nation, along with the feeling that it is endangered, leads to a significantly more exclusive nationalism, in which others are not only unwelcome but also seen as dangers. This specific ‘colour’ of far right nationalism has led authors such as Mudde (2007: 19) to define them specifically as ‘nativists’.

In the context of the parties’ ideology of Europe, the concept of Threat is mobilised to characterise Europe as an endangered space and the EU as a threatening body. Thus, it provides further definition to the parties’ understanding of Europe by placing the continent in a specific situation of emergency, where Europe is presented as threatened on all sides and at risk of disappearing, bringing its heritage of Identity and Liberty down with it. In defining Europe itself as endangered, the parties characterise Europe in the same way as they characterise the nation, showing that familiar tropes are redeployed and applied in new settings. At the same time, however, the EU is presented as a Threat, highlighting once again the ‘dual nature’ of the far right’s understanding of Europe.

The following empirical sections present an overview of the sources of danger identified by the MSI/AN and FN and illustrate how they threaten the other concepts that the parties used to decontest Europe. Three forms of Threat are identified in turn – internal, external and ‘diffuse’– and their relationship with the concepts of Identity and

Liberty is explored.<sup>20</sup> The cumulative effects of this constant reference to Threat are then examined in the concluding section, where it is argued that they give rise to a ‘politics of emergency’ where the studied parties present themselves as the only ones who are aware of the dangerous situation that Europe is in.

Before moving on, it is important to introduce a caveat: with this concept in particular, the boundaries between what threatens the nation and what threatens Europe are particularly blurry. This chapter focuses more on what threatens Europe, but it will be clear that, in many cases, Europe may simply be a place on which to project national fears.

## DECLINE, BREAKDOWN AND INTERNAL ENEMIES: THE DANGER WITHIN

In the MSI/AN and FN’s view, Europe and its nations are endangered by a series of threats of various natures, including a series of internal ones. Internal threats are of a varied nature; however, their main characteristic is that they either originate or are placed within the nation and/or state (see Mudde 2007: 64-65). The following sections discuss the main internal threats identified by the studied parties, such as demographic decline, the corrupt political class and immigration. Then, they show how they endanger Europe and the previously studied concepts of Identity and Liberty.

## EUROCOMMUNISM, DECLINE AND ‘POLITICIANS’: THE MSI’S INTERNAL THREATS TO EUROPE

The MSI’s ideology of Europe was rich in references to threats of various kinds, although internal threats were not the dominating ones. The threats the MSI identified for Europe were broadly the same as the threats it identified for Italy and were well integrated in the party’s ideology. In fact, they were indicative of what the party considered worthy of defending and, conversely, what it considered necessary to oppose.

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<sup>20</sup> Note that while different threats are discussed, this chapter is more interested in showing the relevance of the concept of Threat itself than in exploring the specific forms it takes. As a result, some familiar threats which receive significant attention in the literature (such as immigration or Islam) may be given less space because the focus is on the category of Threat rather than the individual threats that fall into it.

Given the MSI's stark anti-communism, it should appear relatively unsurprising that the first internal threat it identified for Europe was Eurocommunism, the specific European (rather than Soviet) variant of communism. The MSI perceived Eurocommunism as a destabilising force which could entail a loss of Liberty by leading Europe to be placed under external domination. Thus, it acquired its full threatening power in relationship with the external threat represented by the USSR. The danger posed by Eurocommunism is illustrated quite clearly by Romualdi in the following passage, in which he comments on the *Eurodestra* initiative and on the likely outcome of the European elections:

The European Parliament will have, it is true, an overwhelming majority of anti-communist forces. It is however important to remember that not all the political forces represented in that Parliament [...] precisely because they are far from having in place a communist threat in their own States, are able to understand well and promptly the dangers of certain communist initiatives. [...] It would be hasty and superficial to think that once reduced to its just proportion, about 10% of the deputies in the European Parliament, communism will cease to be a danger.

From this derives the extremely important and delicate job of the politicians of the Eurodestra. Certainly not a very numerous group, but without a doubt interpreting much higher, broader and important interests, concerning political health and the guarantee of liberty and development of the entire European and Western world. A world that is decidedly in a crisis, but especially too sick with communism to be sure of being able to save itself without settling in advance on positions of increased cultural and political engagement, centred around the great values of civilisation and of the very same European civilisation. (Romualdi 1979: 17)

Beyond defining Eurocommunism as a threat, the passage is also of interest because it presents the European Right as having a clear 'mission' to 'save' Europe (and the entire Western world) from the decline brought about by this threat. Thus, it mobilises an element of the parties' ideology to define Europe as endangered and presents the MSI as its 'saviour'.

The MSI was also particularly concerned about internal decline threatening the survival of the nation and Europe. Brought about by factors such as demographic decline

and immigration,<sup>21</sup> but also by the acquisition of consumerist behaviours which led Europeans to ‘grow lazy and cowardly, ready only to avoid deciding, seeing, used to giving up and forgetting’ (MSI 1982b), internal decline worried the MSI because it endangered the existing social order and the way of life associated with Europe; in other words, two constitutive elements of its identity. The following passages from the 1990 majority congress motion ‘*Destra in movimento*’, and from documents produced by the 1994’s unitary congress Foreign Policy Commission respectively, capture these fears, as well as their interaction with other pet issues such as drugs and abortion:

Italy, Europe, no longer have the strength and will to reproduce themselves, imprisoned by a hedonistic and consumerist logic. There are undoubtedly issues in the social order that make this issue worse (crisis of the metropolis, work and housing issues, lack of fiscal policies for families). Demographic decline, connected with a broader battle for the right for life (against abortion and drugs), is one of the great questions that we must face, a question where we can show the “difference” between us and others. (MSI 1990a)

The ever more serious issues of the demographic and employment imbalance between the northern and southern shore of the Mediterranean, present to Italy and Europe the issue of the uncontrolled invasion of foreigners. In this sense, we have for years proposed a European plan for 20 million Africans in Africa, with an economic return for Europe, and to develop in those countries the necessary conditions of a profitable economy that will prevent the haemorrhage of work from those lands towards Europe. (MSI 1994)

Just like in the case of Eurocommunism, the passages here identify threats to Europe, but also place them in a broader ideational context by tying them to other social issues frequently discussed by the party in other settings. Thus, they identify a threat, but also stress what matters to the MSI and what they stand for.

Finally, the MSI also indicated a specific category of people as being partially to

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<sup>21</sup> Immigration was conspicuously absent from the MSI’s early documents, and only started appearing around the end of the 1980s as the result of cross-pollination with the FN and the emergence of immigration as an issue in Italian politics. However, the MSI’s relationship with the issue was more complex than the FN’s, with the party leadership being reluctant to embrace anti-immigration as an issue (Ignazi 1994: 85-86 and 1998: 414-415; see also Camus 1996: 202 on Rauti’s break with the FN over immigration). AN also sought to maintain a more balanced position on immigration, although it still presented rather restrictive policy preferences (Ignazi 2005, ter Wal 2000).

blame for Europe's decline: the political establishment. Considering the MSI's place as an anti-establishment party in permanent opposition (especially from the mid-1970s—see Ignazi 1998), this attack on the political class should appear as consistent with both their beliefs and their position on the political spectrum.<sup>22</sup> For them, European governments and the political class more broadly were guilty of weakness and lack of vision, unable to 'prepare it [Europe] for the great world challenges' (MSI 1982c) and, as Romualdi (1986) put it in an article, dedicated only to 'speak of nothing but pacifism, disarmament, neutralism and operate as if every day they would like to ditch their commitments, to transform Europe in a denuclearised area, the soft belly of the world, exactly as the Soviets would like'. The European political class was thus presented as an accomplice in Europe's loss of power, and, as a result, in its internal decline and potential fall.

#### TREATING INTERNAL THREATS AS REGULAR POLITICAL CHALLENGES: THE AN'S MOVE AWAY FROM DANGER

Compared with the MSI and the FN, the concept of Threat occupied a marginal position in AN's ideology. The party, in fact, progressively moved away from claiming that Europe was threatened by some kind of existential threat, and started viewing issues that in the past has been so defined as regular issues in day to day politics. Europe, as a result, no longer appeared as endangered or in decline, but merely faced with 'normal' political choices in need of balanced solutions.

In the realm of internal threats, the shift away from emergency and into normal politics can be observed in the specific case of immigration in the following passage from the party's Verona Congress documents:

The quantitative weakening of certain peoples, the incremental explosion of others, the territorial transfers that tend to take on a mass character, pose, with an intensity that risks becoming pressing and destabilising, the question of the relationship between rather different cultural visions [...]. In addition to a certain numerical consistency, in fact, the migratory flux leads to

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<sup>22</sup> The use of anti-establishment over the more familiar 'populist' is a deliberate choice. Populism implies a rejection of all elites as inherently bad, while the MSI's criticism of elites limited itself to a specific political class. The MSI also did not frame its political battle as one opposing 'the good people' against 'the corrupt elite'. For more in-depth discussions of populism and the difference between populism and anti-establishment see Barr 2009, Rovira Kaltwasser et al. 2017, Mény and Surel 2001, Müller 2016, Stanley 2008.

the presence of many men uprooted from their home milieu and many more men that see their home milieu occupied by men that were not there before and that come from afar. For the respective cultural sensibilities (because the milieu is not only a physical fact) this is not void of consequence.

In the same way that it reclaims the cultural identity of the Italian nation and the broader European identity, Alleanza Nazionale recognises the specificities and differences of the other identities, which it respects in their original constitution and with whom it aspires to promote and find, with an open spirit, reciprocally acceptable appropriate forms and ways of peaceful cohabitation. In other words, Alleanza Nazionale knows that the other face of identity (in the singular) is identities (in the plural).

At the same time, the Italian Right feels the duties deriving from history [...]. Alleanza Nazionale knows that the Italian people is a founding part, along with other European peoples, of a civic, judicial, aesthetic, ethic, philosophical identity that does not deserve – in spite of the many mistakes made by Europe in exhausting itself in internecine wars – to dissolve or to be dissolved in an indistinct, magmatic, pseudo-cultural miscellany [...] (AN 1998: 11-12)

The passage is interesting because it offers a view of how the issue of immigration was reinterpreted, going from being a threat to identity to an issue in need of a balanced solution. While immigration was still presented as problematic, and the loss of identity as a possibility, there was also an attempt to find a solution that did not involve presenting other identities as dangerous. In fact, the passage openly acknowledges the plurality of identities and the need to foster peaceful cohabitation, rather than segregation, between them. As the passage later adds, the protection of identity must respect all identities and take place within the understanding that mankind shares a common '*humanitas*'. In short, while references to dangers persisted in AN's definition of Europe, these were no longer existential or all encompassing, but merely in need of careful management.

#### A THREAT IN EVERY CORNER: THE FN'S FEAR OF INTERNAL EUROPEAN DECLINE

Like the MSI, the Front National also presents Europe as endangered by a variety of internal threats closely resembling those identified by the Italian party. However, unlike AN, the party never moved away from this mind set, and the concept of Threat was never



pushed to the bounds of marginality. Thus, throughout its history, the Front National maintained the notion of an internal threat leading to social decline, although the forms this has acquired have been varied, as has been the party's relationship with Europe.

The 1980s Front National appeared particularly concerned about the internal decline of Europe, which was threatened, as it saw it, by a series of negative developments. The elements leading and contributing to Europe's decline (which are presented elsewhere as 'the same that threaten France', Le Pen 1984: 163) were helpfully summarised in the 1986 document '*L'Europe, d'abord une volonté*', an article presenting the FN's freshly elected MPs' and MEPs' vision for Europe:

Struck by senility, blocked by unqualified immigrant labour, led by governments that are happy to manage for the short term; Europe, which had compensated for its political decline through an exceptional economic development after World War Two, appears no longer able to successfully face the great technological revolution to come. (FN 1986)

Four sources of Europe's decline are identified: demography, immigration, the political class, and economic welfare and development. To the four issues identified in the paragraph above, one might also add a general 'spiritual' decline. These issues are present across the history of the Front National, although their relative weight changes over time, as does the extent to which these are European problems.

But why, exactly, were the factors mentioned above viewed as dangerous and contributing to internal decline? Starting with 'spiritual decline', the most time-bound of the elements since it carried weight mostly in the 1980s, its main responsibility was that of weakening Europe and its values. The following passage from Jean-Marie Le Pen's 1984 book illustrates this well, also highlighting the FN's role as a party committed to fighting such decline:

I believe that one of the main dangers that influences France as well as Europe stems from moral laxity, from the spiritual void, from the intellectual sloppiness that is its own. I believe that the easing of the necessary disciplines, the abandonment of fundamental principles have led to a weakening of the abilities to resist and the abilities to react of Europe. In all domains, I believe that the weakening of family ties, of familial solidarity and of national solidarities have led to a phenomenon of dispersion and consequently of impoverishment. The Front National articulates its political project around a recovery, a renaissance, a renewal. It

claims that one must not only recognise the spiritual and moral and national and patriotic dimension, but also organise it, exalt it. (Le Pen 1984: 164-165)

This 'spiritual weakness' was further reinforced by the primacy acquired by economic over spiritual concerns, which led to the (deplorable) 'reduction of man to his purely economic dimension' (Pichon 1989).

While spiritual decline was viewed as endangering Europe's identity, it was largely trumped by the threat of demographic decline and its sister issue, immigration. Both issues feature in the party's definition of Europe since its early years and appear to threaten its Identity and its Liberty. They also, rather helpfully, tied the European issue to a core domestic policy for far right parties in general (e.g., Fennema 1997, Ivarsflaten 2008, Hainsworth 2008: 70-77).

The danger posed by demographic decline to Europe was already discussed in the party's 1979 European election manifesto<sup>23</sup> which claimed that

Europe, as the rest of West, suffers from a drop in the birth rate that can lead to the slavery and even to the disappearance of its nations. To overcome the crisis of civilisation that started this change, it is necessary to re-establish the moral values that have made it supreme and elaborate an ardent family policy. No effort in this direction will be too expensive given the danger one is exposed to. (Le National 1979)

The passage illustrates well the way in which demographic decline threatened the concepts of Identity and Liberty that the party used to decontest Europe, especially through the references to 'slavery' and the 'disappearance of nations'. In the party's logic, a smaller European community would not be able to defend its own freedom, and would also risk disappearing because of its inability to transmit its own heritage and, hence, the elements that constitute its identity to younger generations.

Immigration further reinforced this form of demographic decline in the FN's view, especially because the party expected it to lead to the progressive replacement of native populations with foreign 'Others', thus diluting and ultimately destroying Europe's distinctive culture. The link between the two is captured in this speech by Jean-Marie Le

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<sup>23</sup> While the party produced a manifesto, it did not participate in the actual election because, following the failure to broker a deal with Tixier-Vignancour's *Parti des Forces Nouvelles* (the MSI's partner in the *Eurodestra*), the Front National withdrew its list (see Camus 1997: 43, Reungoat 2015: 228).

Pen, where he argues that fostering immigration is based on some deeply flawed assumptions about communities:

It is striking to note that all reports converge on the demographic difficulties that Europe will face, without however being able to come to the necessary conclusions, that is, the relaunch of European fertility. We are assisting to the beginning of a planned population replacement on the European continent through massive immigration (UN: 240 million in 25 years). We are here at the heart of the globalist puzzle that considers that men are interchangeable without consideration for identities, cultures and history. The “Old Europe” as the Americans call it can by now disappear as a homogenous continent. (Le Pen 2003)

Europe as a community thus appears as threatened with losing its homogeneity and ultimately morphing into something radically different unless birth-rate policies are pursued. In their absence, Europe, in its current form, appears as threatened by oblivion.

While there was a concern with the overall effects of immigration on Europe, it is important to note that the main way in which Europe came into this conversation was through the negative role played by the European Union in fostering immigration. Thus, for example, and inserting herself in a familiar lineage within the party (see for example, the 1988 statement by Chevallier on the EU’s pro-immigration policies, or Carl Lang’s 2003 article in which Turkish accession is presented as a means to dissolve Europe’s nations in ‘an ensemble devoid of unity, without a soul, without borders, subject to immigration from the entire world and to the sole rule of the market’), Marine Le Pen recently defined immigration as ‘the child of the European Union’ (Le Pen 2016). In this sense, the EU is an accomplice in the process of internal decline, thus presenting a distinct threat in itself which will be further discussed in later sections of this chapter when considering the EU as a ‘diffuse’ threat.

Finally, like the MSI, the FN identified the political class as an ‘enabling factor’ of internal, national and European decline, and hence as a threat. Unlike the MSI, however, this was also inserted within a populist narrative where the party claimed to represent ‘the people’ and defend them from the ‘corrupt (and, one may add, threatening) elite’. The core elements of the critique to the political class as an internal threat are relatively stable over time and well expressed in the following passage from the article ‘*L’engrenage de Maastricht*’ published in *La Lettre de Jean-Marie Le Pen*, in which the parliamentary votes on the Maastricht Treaty are discussed:

The “euro-federasts” [sic], to start. Socialists and UDF have met to sell off France to the Brussels technocrats. Out of the federation, our country would in fact be condemned to become a sort of underdeveloped Republic and its government forced to submit to external (translated: German) pressures, which would undermine its sovereignty and the room for manoeuvre of the State. Europe itself would leave history through the small door, having lost the chance to unite. A slow death, a terrible agony, an apocalyptic picture in front of which our democratic visionaries close their eyes with horror and sadness. And that justifies that one does what is good for the people in spite of what the people want, by ratifying these shameful treaties in its place.

Those who voted against: the Front National, clearly, faithful to its principles and concerned about the interests of France, of the French and of the European peoples; the communists, who consider the Europe of the future too liberal and bureaucratic, insufficiently social and coveting the votes of the anti-Europeans of the left; the Greens, finally, because they would like to have it all and have it now, that is from 1994 or just after, a federation that owns up to it. Without forgetting two honourable representatives of the RPR, touched by a stroke of lucidity or having pressed the wrong button. Because their co-religionists abstained with the conviction and firmness that usually characterise the stands of their movement. [...] (Salagnac 1992)

Salagnac here does two things. First of all, she homogenises the French political class by resorting to scare tactics in presenting those in favour of Maastricht as colluding to dissolve the nation, and those who oppose it as motivated by instrumental or deeply misguided concerns. As a result, the elite as a whole is presented as either selling off the nation (or being ready to do so) or not working towards its protection, thereby becoming a threat to its survival and to its ability to remain sovereign. Second, she presents the FN as the only political force that has the interests of Europe and its nations at heart and that is somehow committed to maintaining its existing form. Thus, she stresses the presence of a threat to Europe and especially its nations, all the while presenting her party as the only true defender of European and national values.

This form of critique remains similar across time, with the domestic political class being most frequently accused of: selling off France to Brussels and financial lobbies (e.g., FN 2004, Le Pen 2005, FN 2012a), actively working to dissolve it in a globalist magma (a critique which will be further discussed in the sections concerning ‘diffuse’

threats), or abandoning national sovereignty and European autonomy to which they do not attach importance (see on this the 2002 programme which accuses French leaders of ‘regretting’ Yalta because it made their life easier) in their march towards European integration. Thus, the ‘mad’ political class does nothing but bring the country (and Europe) towards a cliff edge where they incite the French to move ‘*En avant!*’ (Le Pen 2005).

## HOSTILE STATES AND FOREIGN OTHERS: THE DANGER FROM OUTSIDE

The previous section showed how the MSI and the FN, but not AN, viewed Europe and its nations as endangered by a series of internal threats which needed to be fended off as a matter of urgency. While the first two created a ‘politics of emergency’, the latter tended to view problematic issues as elements in need of resolution, rather than jumping to the worst possible scenarios.

Similar dynamics are at play in the identification of external threats. Unlike internal threats, external threats come from elsewhere and are located outside the national and state boundaries, presenting external Others and the ‘Outside’ as inherently dangerous. The following sections discuss the main external threats identified by the studied parties, focusing most prominently on the Soviet Union and the United States, by far the most concerning among them. They show that these external threats were particularly taxing on the notion of Liberty, as they reflected the fear of control from a non-national body, but also presented a challenge to Identity.

## THE SOVIET UNION, INTERNATIONAL COMMUNISM AND THE USA: THE MSI’S EXTERNAL THREATS TO EUROPE

The MSI’s understanding of Europe was largely dominated by the view that the continent was endangered by two external threats: the Soviet Union (and international communism), and the USA. In the party’s view, communism and its state embodiment represented the main threats to Europe’s Liberty by limiting its agency, endangering its ‘spiritual’ way of life and forcing it within unnatural borders. The USA, however, also presented a threat to Europe by altering its way of life and limiting its autonomy.

The Soviet Union occupied a preeminent place in the MSI's ideology, representing an immediate threat to Europe's survival. The sense of impending danger generated by the Soviet Union is perhaps best captured in the two following passages by Michele Rallo and Fernando Crociani, both from the end of the 1970s and both presented in introductions to interviews with party leaders. In the introduction to the *Intervista sull'Eurodestra*, in which Almirante discussed the logic underpinning the collaborative effort of far right parties to present a shared programme for the European elections, interviewer and MSI politician Rallo summarised the positions of the *Eurodestra* as follows:

In international politics, finally, the Eurodestra stands for Western solidarity. The defence of the part of Europe free from Soviet imperialism (which, as we have seen, is one of the fundamental needs leading to the birth of the Eurodestra) is today a topic of such burning urgency that it does not allow hesitations of sorts, it does not justify any third-force ambiguities, it does not allow for any pause for reflection. The Eurodestra is certainly in favour of a larger and more committed participation of Europe in the defence of the Free World, but it is also in favour of stronger Atlantic solidarity, and, even more, in favour of a concrete, operational western solidarity between all the nations that fight for their survival in front of the menace of sovietism. (Almirante 1978: 10-11)

A similar sense of urgency can be identified in the following passage from the introduction to Romualdi's *Intervista sull'Europa*, in which party activist Crociani discusses what Europe represents to the party:

Europe. Not only the one of our dreams, let us be clear, but that of our sacrifices; of the memorable existence and of the fight of the Italian and European political right, that have made and make of the political unity of Europe a flag and, together, the meeting point of all the knots that need to be untangled or cut to solve together the tragedy of our Homelands and of our civilisation, that international communism seeks to extinguish and remove from the memory and hope of men. (Romualdi 1979: 5)

The two passages concern different aspects of the MSI's European policy (the first being concerned with the Atlantic Alliance, and the second focusing on European unity), but share a similar understanding of Europe as deeply threatened by the Soviet Union and international communism. In both passages, Europe is presented as clearly threatened by

an external enemy who might wipe it off the surface of the Earth. Thus, they highlight both the existence of a threat and the sense of emergency associated with it.

The Soviet Union was defined as a threat to Europe both because it could potentially physically annihilate the continent, and also because it endangered its core elements, and particularly its Liberty. In other words, because the party viewed Europe as a space of Liberty, the Soviet Union was defined as a danger because it deprived Europe of this key characteristic. Thus, on the one side, it endangered Europe by means of military power because of its imperial ‘expansionist logic’ (MSI 1982b) and its proximity to Europe, which would make the latter ‘a target, hit by the presence of the Soviet theatre nuclear weapons; the Soviet’s SS-20 could and can destroy Europe in a few minutes’ (MSI 1987d); on the other, it limited Europe’s power and autonomy by means of hostile politics aimed at neutralising Europe so as to have on its doorstep an ‘immense, dead political bog and at the same time a formidable laboratory of goods made available to its proletarian collectivized markets’ (MSI 1982c). To put it briefly, the Soviet Union threatened Europe’s very being by endangering not only its existence, but also its nature.

A final element worth noting about the Soviet Union and communism in general is that they were so embedded in the party’s ideology that they retained the qualification of threat even after the fall of the USSR. Thus, as late as 1995, the theses of the Fiuggi Congress, which marked the beginning of a formal transition from the far right to the conservative right, still highlighted the need for the new democracies in the East to ‘eradicate any residue of “real socialism” and even more so the recycling of the communist “nomenklatura”, albeit under the label of “socialist” or “social-democratic”’ (AN 1995: 46; see also AN 1994b). Failure to do this, the passage insisted, would present a serious threat to the Union’s future, suggesting that communism remained a threatening element even after the demise of the Soviet Union.

Beyond the Soviet Union, the MSI was also concerned, albeit to a lesser extent and with less urgency, with a second external threat: the United States of America. The party, in fact, largely depicted Europe as dominated by ‘twin imperialisms’ which both, in their own way, threatened its survival. It is possible to detect two reasons why the MSI considered the USA dangerous: first of all, they were unsure about their loyalty to Europe and suspected they might want to undermine the continent; second, the USA imported a way of life that was threatening to European traditions. This short passage from the

majority congress motion '*Continuare per rinnovare*' illustrates both reasons when it claims that

we must reassess, motivate and document our opposition to the 'civilisation of Coca-Cola' coming from the United States of America, which disaggregates the spirit and the soul of our popular and national traditions. In particular, the deep link that unites the USA presidency and the USSR, at the expense of Europe and the free world, must be highlighted. (MSI 1979a)

In singling out the USA as the 'civilisation of Coca-Cola', the passage reveals that the MSI saw the USA as a clear threat to European identity, while the denunciation of the USA for its closeness to the USSR 'at the expense of Europe and the free world' underlines the party's concern for American loyalty.

Doubts about the USA's loyalty to Europe worried the MSI and led it to view the USA critically, although not necessarily as a threat. In fact, the MSI was rather ambivalent about the American ally: on one hand, it suspected the latter of deliberately limiting Europe's autonomy and power; on the other, the party was also painfully aware of the necessity of the Atlantic Alliance as a way to defend Europe from Soviet aggression.<sup>24</sup> The MSI's ambivalence is well captured by Romualdi in the *Intervista*, when he says that

we have said many times and repeated that that which has mortified and keeps mortifying Europe politically, was not so much the defeat with its disastrous consequences [...]; rather, it was the harsh diktat of Yalta, which dividing it, has intended to destroy it politically, to make it on the one side the colonial empire of communism, and on the other side, the zone of influence of the democratic imperialism of the USA. The Americans do not know it, and do not want to talk about it, but this is the truth. The reality that has obstructed so far and still keeps obstructing practically and psychologically the development of the process of political unity of the continent. (Romualdi 1979: 51)

While Romualdi was broadly positive about the necessity of Europe-USA relationships, in this passage he nonetheless displays clearly the belief that the USA and Russia were

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<sup>24</sup> The MSI had a troubled relationship with NATO. As Parlato (2005: 140ff) argues, the MSI was divided between those who opposed the Alliance on political and cultural grounds, looking at the USA as the defeaters of fascism and as embodying an anti-spiritual lifestyle, and those who considered that joining the Alliance was the only way to defend Western civilisation and reframe the political battle in terms of communism versus anti-communism. While the latter ended up imposing itself, and the MSI declared its allegiance to NATO in 1951, the wisdom of the choice was frequently questioned in party debates.



both to blame for the partition of Europe after World War Two and its subsequent political destruction. As a later article by the same author in the *Secolo d'Italia* put it, the USA failed 'to understand the importance in the great fight against communist imperialism, eternally in expansion in the world, that a great, economically and politically united Europe, able to take on its own responsibilities, could have' (Romualdi 1986).

The fear that the USA might continue to limit European autonomy remained even after 1989, when the party started being increasingly concerned about the advent of a 'second Yalta' which would divide Europe on the 'territorial objectives' achieved by the winners, rather than on ideological grounds, leaving Eastern Europe in particular as a space of limited sovereignty (MSI 1990c). In a similar vein, the 1994 programme of AN claimed that 'the Europe that has seen the states of the East return free and sovereign cannot be mutilated again in its perspectives and in its unitary decisions by new agreements between the USA and the USSR' (AN 1994a). Thus, the USA, while not as dangerous as the USSR, clearly restrained Europe's freedom and its unitary aspirations.

Somewhat more threatening in the case of the USA was its cultural influence on Europe, which imported a distinctly unfamiliar and negative model into the continent. This sense of American cultural domination is well presented in this paragraph from the *Secolo d'Italia*, where Mantovani, the editor at the time, wrote that

Europe, in theory so aristocratically proud of its own civilisation by now finds itself let us not say unitary, but homogenous, only in the acquisition of the fashions, styles, behaviours that reach it from the other side of the Atlantic, from a new Nation, formerly a daughter of Europe, but become with time an original and autonomous melting pot of peoples, races, cultures from all parts of the world. (Mantovani 1985)

This cultural domination was perceived within the party as a negative development because it imposed a new way of life 'based on the negation of all that Europeans have always considered as such [a model of life], because it is founded on agnosticism, on materialism, on egoism, on hedonism, on a self-serving consumerism absurdly transformed into a "value"' (MSI 1987a). The USA, then, were considered as a threat to European identity because they imported a foreign model of culture based on values contrary to those of the continent's original identity. This was further tied in, in later documents, with new emerging issues such as immigration via the fear of Europe becoming like the USA, a 'melting pot' that has 'given up on its roots and origins', losing

all ‘national specificity’ to replace it with an ‘amorphous and indefinite’ new model (MSI 1990a).

## ENEMIES INTO FRIENDS: AN’S REVISED VIEWS ON FORMER EXTERNAL THREATS

As with internal threats, the idea of a threat endangering Europe from the outside is almost absent in the writings of the AN, and occupies, at best, a marginal position. Thus, while the party may have criticised external actors such as the European Commission or fellow European partners, their positions lacked the sense of urgency of the MSI’s and did not suggest that it was the entire European civilisation that was at risk from their actions. As a result, they did not fulfil the criteria to be threats in need of urgent addressing.

Furthermore, and reinforcing the sense of a transition, some former threats were openly embraced, as in the case of the USA which, as this passage from the 2004 manifesto illustrates, became clear friends rather than untrustworthy allies:

Europe, in the Right’s perspective, constitutes one of the founding pillars of the West [...] The European role can never be understood in opposition to the other side of the Atlantic. The United States, let us remember this, were born from a rib of Europe and all the national cultures of Europe are represented there, starting from the Italian one. The role of Europe is to bring into the alliance its wisdom, its millenary ability to filter cultures, to converse with the South of the world. Intelligent allies, able to raise critiques and affirm their perspectives when necessary. But without betraying the loyal relationship with America [...]. The awareness of Occidentalism, then, and the particular link with America, are a great truth that must accompany the European processes. (AN 2004)

The passage is striking in comparison with previous positions expressed by the MSI in so far as it embraces the alliance with the USA fully, rather than reluctantly. Thus, while Europe is still considered to be a ‘critical friend’ able to raise ‘intelligent critiques’, it is committed to the transatlantic partnership and ready to stand by its historical ally, rather than questioning its loyalty.

## COMMUNISTS, AMERICANS, AND MUSLIMS: THE FN'S EXTERNAL THREATS

Compared with the MSI, the Front National showed a lower level of concern for external threats to Europe, although this is largely due to the fact that, since the end of the 1980s, they significantly shifted their focus to the 'diffuse' threats of globalisation and the EU. Nevertheless, the FN still identified a number of external threats to Europe which will sound rather familiar.

Like the MSI, the early Front National considered communist imperialism the main external threat affecting Europe, a fear which was further compounded by the presence of a strong domestic Communist party. Its importance to the party can be gauged by the fact that it was already present in its 1978 programme for the local elections in Paris (Le National 1978), and was repeated in almost exactly the same words in the 1981 programme for the legislative elections (FN 1981). It is notable that this specific point is included on very short programmes—one of which being on local elections where this issue would be marginal—as it suggests it is a key part of the party's identity. Both documents stressed that the party was committed to 'ensure peace and national independence' through 'loyalty to our European and Atlantic alliances', which were defined as 'our most reliable guarantee against Communist imperialism' (Le National 1978, FN 1981).

In a similar way to the Italian party, the FN viewed the Soviet Union as endangering both Europe's material and spiritual survival, as the following passage from Bruno Mégret illustrates:

### *11) Consider serenely the USSR as our main enemy*

Soviet hegemony directly threatens our security, and, eventually, our identity and our liberty. It is thus necessary to consider it our enemy and oppose it not with an open and aggressive fight, but with a firm and uncompromising attitude which, while not refusing dialogue, does not endorse the unacceptable. This implies, in addition, to not abandon the countries of Europe subjugated to its imperialism

### *12) Cease financing international communism*

It is necessary to stop financing directly or indirectly international communism [...] It is also necessary to fight vigorously the Soviets' technological espionage. (Mégret 1987)

The passage above is extracted from a document entitled 'Creating a Powerful Europe',

prepared for Le Pen's 1988 presidential campaign. The original document opens with the acknowledgement that 'Soviet imperialism becomes more and more threatening by the day' and discusses a number of measures to advance to make Europe more powerful (including the 'revival' of European identity and the introduction of a common currency). In points 11 and 12 of the document, Mégret assesses specifically the danger posed by the Soviet Union, presenting it as Europe's 'main enemy' because it threatens its security and, importantly for this study, the core concepts of Identity and Liberty. As with the MSI, this is also accompanied by the insistence on the imperative need to fight it both politically and economically, because, as Le Pen put it in his 1984 book, not doing so would lead Europe to risk 'objectively ending up in the Gulag before the end of the century' (1984: 165), thus losing all autonomy.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to the USSR, the FN was also concerned about the USA's influence on Europe. Early documents of the FN already acknowledged American influence on Europe as a negative feature, defining Europe as 'subject to the economic and cultural pressures of the USA' (Le National 1979: 8-9); but, the Cold War, along with a certain affinity with Reagan, ensured that levels of criticism of the USA were kept to a minimum. It was not until the fall of the Berlin Wall and the first Gulf War that the FN shifted to a more explicitly anti-American stance in its international relations (Birenbaum 1992: 182-191, Evans 2007) and that the USA acquired the more definite contours of a threat to Europe. In fact, they were accused of pushing for a 'New World Order' based on economic globalisation, international organisations and American domination by imposing 'diktats' on European countries by means of the EU and ultimately 'depriving them of their liberty and sovereignty' (Le Pen 1993; see also Le Pen 1997, 1998). The USA, however, were by themselves less dangerous than the Soviet Union; what made the USA dangerous was their influence on European culture and on the EU, a body whose quality as a threat will be discussed later.

Along with Soviet Communism and the USA, the Front National identified an additional threat that the MSI and AN did not appear to care much about: the Third World

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<sup>25</sup> The FN's fear of the USSR did not survive its fall. In fact, following the fall of the USSR, the FN adopted a much less critical position towards its successor, seeing it as a source of inspiration and country of interest (e.g., FN 2002, 2012a). This mirrors a broader tendency among the European far right to view Russia positively, whether this be due to an affinity with Vladimir Putin's political leadership or, as some have claimed, as a result of Russian funding supporting their activity. For a recent discussion of the relationship between Russia and the far right in Western Europe, see Shekhovstov 2018.

and Islam. In fact, because of the limited presence of immigrants in Italy, the MSI did not see the Third World or Islam as a particularly salient issue (if anything, a fraction of the MSI even supported further engagement with the Third World), while France's experience of immigration made this external threat more salient and urgent because of its domestic implications. Starting from the 1980s, the FN presented Europe as endangered by 'islamo-revolutionary hegemony, in any case the hegemony of the Third World, borne out of the demographic explosion of the Third World' (Le Pen 1984: 164; see also Mégret 1987). This concern with the Third World was helpful in linking together both external threats and internal ones, because the 'demographic explosion of the Third World' necessarily lead to immigration, a threat discussed earlier. It also served to critique the European Parliament as 'an assembly responsive to Marxist dialectics and attentive to the Third-Worldist ideology' (Le Pen 1985: 188). Steadily through time, the focus shifted from 'The Third World and Islam' in general to Islam more specifically. Islam was, in particular, presented as a force that threatened Europe's deeply held Christian identities and traditions by seeking to impose 'Islamist' ways of life on European countries (Lang 2004, Langlois 2014). Islam also moved from being a clearly external threat to being one more firmly anchored within European nations because of immigration. Thus, Europe became in the party's words a continent 'in move towards islamisation' (FN 2009), at the expenses of its own native traditions and local identities.

## MANY-HEADED MONSTERS: DIFFUSE SOURCES OF DANGER

The previous section showed how the MSI and FN's world was not only populated with internal threats, but also with external enemies. As before, on the other hand, AN did not present Europe as endangered by threats, and even radically changed its position on certain countries previously viewed as dangerous.

There is a final category of threats worth discussing, especially given their dominance in the Front National's ideology: diffuse threats. Diffuse threats straddle the interface between internal and external threats because they are neither situated exclusively within the state, not clearly imputable to a single foreign actor or presence. This 'shapelessness' makes them more pervasive and all-encompassing than the previous two. The following sections discuss this type of threat, focusing in particular on globalisation, the 'diffuse' threat par excellence. While this was only marginally relevant

to the MSI and AN, it acquired a central relevance for the FN from the beginning of the 1990s, especially in relation to the EU. This type of threat is particularly taxing on Identity, although, by shifting the loci of power, it also affects Liberty.

#### AFTER THEIR TIME, AND AFTER THEIR TRANSFORMATION: THE LIMITED ROLE OF DIFFUSE THREATS IN THE MSI AND AN

Diffuse threats were barely present in the MSI and AN's vision of Europe. In the MSI's view, in fact, Europe was mainly threatened by the USSR, while AN rarely made reference to the concept of Threat. For the MSI, the absence of references to the diffuse threat of globalisation so keenly discussed by the FN may be explained by the fact that the issue was simply irrelevant during the party's years of existence. The closest thing to a 'diffuse threat' in the MSI's ideology is 'multinational supercapitalism' (e.g., MSI 1990b), but this was rarely mentioned in conjunction with Europe.

AN, unlike the MSI, did speak of globalisation; however, as in the previous cases, it did not treat it as a threat but rather, as a process in need of management. The 1999 Euromanifesto is a helpful document to consult to illustrate how AN approached globalisation:

Even the phenomenon of globalisation – the great change of this end of millennium – finds Europe unprepared, in spite of its placing itself in favour of liberalisation of world trade. Its unpreparedness derives from the incapacity to elaborate a homogenous project able to deal with the phenomenon, which, if it may not be arrested, could at least be directed as to avoid social and economic crises in this or that region, or in this or that sector. Free competition, in fact, cannot exist if the starting conditions are not the same. [...] We do not ask the reinstatement of instruments that have already been tried and considered inappropriate to solve the issue, such as protectionism. We interrogate ourselves on the ways to prevent a false competition from creating deep and durable crises [...]. We do not request the reinstatement of borders, but we interrogate ourselves on the real possibilities, and not just hypothetical, to face globalisation with the creation of European quality trademarks [...] All this presupposes a policy aimed at strengthening the small and medium businesses, and the artisanal ones, the only ones able to employ a professionalism linked to traditions and to the history of the regions in which they developed. (AN 1999)

AN, as the document shows (and as will appear as strikingly different from the FN), acknowledged the existence and difficulties of globalisation, without, however, rejecting the process. Thus, while describing globalisation as a phenomenon that created tensions and which Europe had found itself unprepared for, the party focused more on finding ways to 'direct it'. Once again, AN saw what the MSI and FN interpreted as threats as merely policy issues among others.

Within this context, it is also relevant to underline that in a striking contrast with the FN, AN saw the EU as a body that could help manage globalisation. AN, in fact, while seeing the EU as a potential danger in this case, maintained a constructive attitude towards it. Thus, it typically called for finding a balance between the national interest and the shared European interest, and advocated the creation of a 'more conscious political Europe, as the harmonious sum of sovereignties, in which the democratic nature of a responsible government prevails' (AN 2002). A similar point was raised in a more critical 2008 article in the *Secolo d'Italia*, which highlighted that the EU Constitutional Treaty ended up making the EU 'an instrument of neoliberal globalisation' because it was put at the service of 'free and undistorted competition'; but, at the same time, Europe was 'something too important to be abandoned to the decisions of a class of, too often insufficiently forward-looking, technocrats and eurobureaucrats'. The implication, then, was not that national governments should reject the EU, but rather that they should keep engaging with it and make it less of an instrument of globalisation and more of an instrument to find a balance between national interests (Carrino 2008). Thus, the EU appeared as a solution to issues, not as a threat to the survival of Europe and its nations.

## THE TROJAN HORSE OF GLOBALISATION: THE FN AND THE EU AS A DIFFUSE THREAT

Diffuse threats occupy a central place in the FN's definition of Europe, and comprise of two deeply interwoven dangers: the process of globalisation on one side, and, most importantly, its 'Trojan horse' the European Union. Both remove key boundaries, and the EU in particular also shifts control away from nations, thus representing a threat to the social makeup of Europe. While, strictly speaking, these are almost invariably dangers to Europe's nations, rather than to Europe as a whole (although the fact that the EU monopolises the definition of Europe is not entirely unproblematic for the FN), they are

still central to the definition of Europe when taken in the narrow meaning of ‘the EU’.

FN criticism of the EU as a body that threatens identities already started in the mid-1980s, following the Single European Act. The EU was presented in documents from the time as a ‘levelling’ construction which destroyed local identities and harmed national prosperity. In particular, the FN suggested that the EU not only removed internal boundaries, but, much more dangerously, removed boundaries between Europeans and other non-European peoples. As the *Passeport pour la victoire* put it:

Founded exclusively on the objectives of economic liberalism, the European Economic Community wants to remove internal borders – very well – but it opens at the same time the borders of Europe to the external world. Instead of being the instrument of the construction of an authentic community, it becomes in this way a factor of destruction of identities. It opens Europe to the wild winds of all subversive influences. (FN 1989: 95)

In addition to viewing the EU as a dangerous boundary-removing entity, the FN also questioned its motives, arguing that this destruction of borders was aimed at facilitating the emergence of a new global order dominated by homogenous countries and faceless economic interests. This narrative, already present in the excerpt above, is well developed in the following passage from the internal party guide *‘Militer au Front’*:

The debate on Europe is completely distorted, because there are in fact two radically different conceptions of Europe.

One is founded on the idea that the world is destined to homogenise and unite, and that Europe in this perspective is nothing but a stage. At the same time in which the intra-European borders are being brought down, the border between Europe and the rest of the world is also being lowered. And the construction of Europe is being based on the economy, which is not specific to our continent, all the while pushing for total integration.

The other is founded on the idea that the survival of European nations is threatened and they have to unite to preserve their identity and retrieve their power. Europe is thus conceived as a means to defend the independence of nations or of national identities.

The first conception is that of a cosmopolitan or globalist Europe; the second is that of Europe understood as a community of civilisation.

The first one destroys the nations, the second one ensures



their survival. The first one is an accelerator of decline, the second an instrument of renaissance. The first is the conception of the Brussels technocrats and of establishment politicians, the second is our conception. (FN 1991: 115)

Underlying the EU's effort to remove borders, then, is its 'globalist' ideology based primarily on economics and, what a later document dubs 'materialist utopias' reminiscent of the USSR (Le Pen 1994). Within this context, the EU is then presented as a mere stage in the creation of a cosmopolitan global order and, therefore, as a danger to the nations and identities of Europe. While the term globalisation is not mentioned explicitly, it is clear here that this is indeed the unspoken threat that the EU is pushing forwards. Interestingly, the passage also problematises the EU's monopoly over the term 'Europe' and presents a familiar distinction within the party between Europe and the EU (see for example Le Gallou 1989, Gollnisch 2008, Le Pen 2017a), and between a specific view of how a political Europe should operate and how the EU actually operates.

As presented by the FN, then, the EU appears to carry within it the worst of the party's two (former) external enemies. From the USSR, it inherits power-hoarding tendencies and the bureaucratic structures of a multi-national empire, in which identities are irrelevant. From the USA, it takes on the subjugation to the ideology of free markets and mass consumerism, as well as a treacherous 'melting pot' aspect.

Beyond threatening identities, however, the EU is to the FN a very real threat to Liberty. The introduction of the Maastricht Treaty in particular caused this development, an element that is captured most clearly in the 'Reims Oath', a key document worth citing in full:

This powerless and corrupted system asks the people to give up their national sovereignty in favour of a supra-national state with a federal mission, thus destroying in time our identity, our language, our culture.

In a strictly materialist and mercantile perspective, it gives to a plutocratic oligarchy the upper hand on our six century old currency and thus allows it to govern our nation.

It accepts, with little regard for our Constitution, with the complicity of the man who is its guardian and the body charged of defending it, the subordination of French laws to the European law.

It gives to foreigners the right to vote and opens our

borders to foreign immigration.

All these abandonments are contrary to the principles of the State, to the laws of the Republic and even more to the unwritten traditions, usages and customs of the Nation.

It thus initiates a process which it proclaims irreversible, regardless of the indissoluble rights of the future generations, a process that will ineluctably lead to the loss of our liberties, to the dissolution of the State, to the eradication of our language, to the disappearance of the French Army and finally to the death of France.

Reunited in Reims, in this sacred spot for the Homeland, symbol of its foundation, of its rootedness and of its permanence.

We solemnly declare that we reject the Maastricht Treaty, whose signature and ratification are sullied by nullity.

We swear to fight with all our strength until 20 September and if the totalitarian methods of power did manage to mislead the people, to fight against the execution of the Maastricht plot.

We swear to demand justice for the forfeits and betrayals that might lead to abandoning the smallest parcel of national sovereignty.

We swear to defend the liberties, independence, freedom of the French people, its culture, its language, its humanist and Christian civilisation against the political genocide that is the infamous treaty of Maastricht. (Le Pen 1992)

The Reims Oath, pronounced in 1992, summarises the main reasons why the party opposed the Maastricht Treaty and reflects well the view of the EU as a threat to both Liberty and Identity. The first paragraphs, in fact, highlight the dangers the EU poses to various aspects of Identity and, relatedly, to Liberty, by stifling the nation's identity and reducing its ability to express itself within the confines of the state with internally voted laws. The entire oath is also steeped in the language of emergency and immediate threat ('destroying', 'subordination', 'abandonment'), as well as in references to an oncoming battle for survival ('we swear to fight', 'we swear to defend', 'protect from political genocide'), underscoring once again the threatening character of the EU as well as the party's view of itself as the 'saviour' of France.

Criticism of the EU as a 'Trojan horse of globalisation' (FN 2012a) dedicated to the destruction of national identities and liberties remains a constant within the party to this day. The FN has, in fact, been remarkably consistent in its positions on globalisation,

and this has been the case across the party. The following passages from three different party sources produced in different decades help illustrate the continuity of its message: the first is a speech given in 1998 by Jean-Marie Le Pen at the party's yearly Joan of Arc march; the second, a speech by Bruno Gollnisch at the FN's summer school in 2008; and the third, a press release from 2012:

We see that we lose here what is essential: sovereignty, independence, liberty, security, the right to make our own laws, to live according to our laws and traditions, to be able to elect those who govern us, to live in our own country, in a framework apt for human needs. The one that generations and generations have lived in, often in poverty and adversity, but always in liberty, in the beauty of our landscapes, in the respect of our ancestors, of our martyrs, of our saints, and of our heroes, in the love of our own people and of the land where we come from and where we will join them. [...]

To entice the mugs, the pro-Europeans told us: "Europe will lead to more jobs, more security, less taxes, more wellbeing". But the more we walk towards this illusion, the further away it gets.

Since Maastricht, the contrary has happened. More and more unemployed, more and more poor, even destitute people, millions of homeless people. More and more immigrants coming from all over the world [...] More and more insecurity in the streets [...] Violence grows every day [...]. (Le Pen 1998)

The destructive euro-globalism is still there: international free trade without protection, leading to unfair competition, closures or relocation of companies. A so-called "liberalisation" of services, which will pull millions of wages down... A European Central Bank that controls our finances, therefore our economy, therefore our social policy, from Frankfurt, with no oversight [...]. In this Europe without borders and without identity, Brussels will decide entry permits throughout the European Union, therefore in France. [...] The borders of Europe remain deliberately undefined, and the conditions for joining, almost exclusively ideological and administrative, are so loose that tomorrow Uzbekistan or Algeria could become members. The preamble of the Treaty refuses to recognise the Christian roots of Europe so as to be able to better integrate Turkey, whose

membership is still being negotiated, no matter what Sarkozy claims. (Gollnisch 2008)

According to the German newspaper *Die Welt*, the European leaders should present a total recasting of the European Union in the next European summit [...].

Bogged down in the crisis of a noxious and unviable single currency, the Europeanist caste is ready to sacrifice democracy, the nations and our social models to save its mad ideology.

This plan, put in place behind the people's backs, would strip off the nations even more, all in favour of unelected supranational authorities, would consecrate the Europe of punishment and of fines that only serve a triumphant Germany. [...]

Rather than getting out of the crisis better off, by studying the means to reach a concerted end to the calamitous experience of the euro, the caste prefers to keep going further towards a federal Europe that produces nothing but misery and anger.

“If Europe does not work, it is because there is not enough Europe”; that is its credo, which justifies all the follies that it is about to force upon the peoples. Same diehard logic as the Soviet Union in its times. (FN 2012b)

The passages are interesting because they highlight both the remarkable consistency of the FN's opposition to the 'euro-globalist' EU as an actor committed to destroying nations, and equally show some shifts in themes to support this claim. The first passage by Le Pen insists more strongly on the theme of identity and the de-bordering operated by the European Union. In addition, he introduces a critique that is also present in Gollnisch's extract, and that is developed much more strongly in the 2012 press release and in recent FN documents: its negative effects on the prosperity of nations. Gollnisch's extract focuses more strongly on the prosperity of nations, linking it clearly with liberalisation and competition, but also bringing in issues of sovereignty through reference to the ECB's policies. He also, like Le Pen, brings immigration and discussion of borders within his frame of attention. The press release, which is less wide-ranging in terms of the issues it develops, focuses specifically on the euro and the loss of national sovereignty in favour of a global, anti-national construction. It also brings in the theme of democracy, absent in the two previous documents but one that Marine Le Pen has

introduced more consistently in the party. Overall, then, while there are some shifts in themes, the EU is presented across time as a powerful threat to the nation and as an agent of the even more powerful threat of globalisation. The following chapter will further develop some of these points, showing how this translates into overall scepticism about European integration and into alternative projects of European integration.

## CONSTRUCTING CRISIS: EMERGENCY POLITICS AND PROVIDENTIAL ACTORS

The sections so far have sought to illustrate how the studied parties mobilised the concept of Threat to further define Europe. In particular, they have shown how the MSI and the FN viewed Europe as endangered by a series of internal, external and diffuse threats which closely resembled those that endangered its constituent nations. These threats were also presented as deeply entwined with the concepts the parties used to define Europe, being as they were threats to Identity and Liberty. Perhaps most importantly, the threats that endangered Europe in the parties' view were not hypothetical and distant, but real and concrete, and threatening Europe's (and its nations') very survival. Thus, they acquired an urgent character requiring prompt action.

Once we know that the MSI and FN view dangers everywhere, the logical question to ask is what the consequences of this vision are. In fact, while it is certainly interesting to gain a sense of what individual elements they consider threatening, understanding the cumulative effect of these threats is perhaps more intriguing because it provides a view of the political implications of a worldview steeped in danger. The contention advanced here is that by presenting Europe as threatened, the parties create a climate of emergency politics in which they can recast their action as that of a 'providential' minority. Elements of this argument have been already mentioned in the empirical sections but will be illustrated here in more detail.

To understand the way in which the studied far right parties create an emergency and then recast themselves as 'providential' actors with clear solutions, it is pertinent to turn to the framework developed by Benjamin Moffitt (2015, 2017) to explain how populist actors perform crises as a method for 'dividing "the people" against a dangerous

other, for presenting themselves as the sovereign voice of “the people” and for radically simplifying political procedures and institutions’ (Moffitt 2015: 210). While the argument advanced here is somewhat different in the elements it stresses because it concerns far right (and in the case of the MSI, non-populist) parties and how they present themselves as ‘providential actors’ rather than representatives of ‘the people’, the steps involved in the process of ‘performance of crisis’ are broadly similar.

Following a tradition that sees crisis as a defining feature of populism (e.g., Mouffe 2005, Rooduijn 2014, Taggart 2000), in his study of populist parties, Moffitt (2017) identifies ‘crisis, breakdown or threat’ as a key element in their style, along with the appeal to the people versus the elite and the use of bad manners. In particular, Moffitt argues that populists construct and ‘perform’ crisis to sustain their success. The author identifies six steps by which they do so: first, populists identify failures in the existing system; second, they link these failures to a wider framework and create a sense of urgency by adding a temporal dimension, typically insisting that issues need to be dealt with immediately; third, they divide between an ‘elite’ responsible for the crisis and ‘the people’, pitting them against each other; fourth, they propagate the crisis through the media; fifth, they argue that the solution to the crisis is simple and that they are the strong leaders needed to address it; finally, they must keep propagating crisis to ensure their political survival. With the exception of the third and last steps, which pertain specifically to populist actors, the points developed by Moffitt may be seen as broader features of ‘crisis politics’, and hence applicable even to non-populist actors such as the MSI. It is also worth noting that while Moffitt studies populism as a style rather than as an ideology, thus making no claim as to whether populists believe in the crises they create, the difference between the two is likely to be irrelevant as far as the effects they create are concerned: whether deliberate or not, and whether done out of belief or as a stylistic feature, the performance of crisis is likely to create the same sense of emergency.

The MSI and the FN follow a number of these steps in their presentation of Europe, and hence create a European crisis. First of all, as the empirical sections have demonstrated, they identify a number of issues both in the form of processes and actors: ‘internal decline’, loss of power and identity, the USA, USSR and EU. They then elevate them to the level of threats by claiming they need to be addressed urgently so as to avoid catastrophic outcomes such as the disappearance of Europe. In no document was this creation of a sense of urgency requiring immediate solutions as clear as in the Reims Oath

discussed earlier (Le Pen 1992). In accusing the Maastricht Treaty of being set on ‘destroying in time our identity, our language, our culture’, giving ‘a plutocratic oligarchy the upper hand’ and ‘giv[ing] to foreigners the right to vote and open[ing] our borders to foreign immigration’, Le Pen identified through a single framework a series of critical issues leading to an ‘irreversible’ process of ‘dissolution of the state’ and the ultimate ‘political genocide’ of France.

The identification of issues and their association with an urgent sense of temporality creates an overall sense of emergency, or ‘crisis’, where the natural state of things is deeply endangered and crucially in need of immediate action for its protection. Thus, when the parties claim things such as ‘the defence of the part of Europe free from Soviet imperialism [...] is today a topic of such burning urgency that it does not allow hesitations of sorts’ (Almirante 1978: 10-11) or that ‘the Europeanist caste is ready to sacrifice democracy, the nations and our social models to save its mad ideology’ (FN 2012b), they are not simply relating a state of affairs or ‘constructing’ a crisis, they are also arguing for the need of appropriate solutions that are commensurate to the urgency and size of the threat being faced. Emergencies, in short, not only create problems: they also require solutions and actors that can advance credible solutions in such a situation.

It is in this context, then, that far right parties can use the notion of an emergency to present themselves as the only actors who are aware of the measure of this danger and are willing to fight it; in other words, they appear as ‘providential’ actors in the system and offer the ‘strong leadership’ that Moffitt appears to refer to. Common to the far right’s vision, in fact, is also the notion that other political actors are either not aware of threats, or are ignoring them, making them the only truly ‘aware’ actors in the political system. This was evident in passages cited earlier, such as the claim by Romualdi that the *Eurodestra* had the job of ‘interpreting much higher, broader and important interests, concerning the political health and the guarantee of liberty and development of the entire EEC’ (Romualdi 1979: 17), or in the FN’s party guide suggestion that the FN was the only actor interested in fighting for the survival and renaissance of the nations of Europe (1991: 115). This also leads them to claim a prophetic nature for themselves, stressing that they could see what others could not, as this passage from an interview with Jean-Marie Le Pen, tellingly titled ‘My truth on Europe’, illustrates:

In all fields, our most pessimist predictions have come true, contra the eternal Europeanists’ promises of an Eldorado. We said

“Maastricht will bring more taxes, more immigration, more insecurity, more unemployment”. We were right. The incorrigible “Maastrichiens” [a wordplay on Maastricht and the French word for dog] invite us to ignore this, they tell us: “let’s forget the past”. That is, they invite us to run towards a cliff, guided not by reason but by ideological passion of the interests of Europe’s enemies. We fight against this amnesiacs’ blindness not just for France but also for the survival of the European homelands and what they represent for world civilisation. (Le Pen 1994)

As a result, the parties appear as both the sole representatives of some higher good which other political actors appear to be wilfully ignoring, but also as prophets of things to be. While in the case of the FN this higher good was indeed often framed as that of the ‘national people’ threatened by a dangerous elite, in the MSI the higher good was not presented in a populist frame, making it less of a populist performance of crisis and more of a ‘simple’ form of ‘crisis politics’.

Before concluding, it is pertinent to note how different this mode of politics appeared from that of AN. A common thread in these three empirical chapters has been the observation of AN’s pragmatic approach to politics. In this chapter in particular, this manifested itself in an absence of the concept of Threat and an approach to problems that involved the identification of issues and the advancement of balanced solutions to approach them. In this sense, instead of identifying issues, linking them together and reading through a temporal frame aimed at creating a sense of emergency, AN limited itself to the identification of issues without claiming the need to address them urgently. Furthermore, it did not present itself as the only holder of simple and straightforward solutions (or, indeed, as a representative of ‘the people’ against the elite that had created the issues), but acknowledged a level of complexity in political decision making. As a result, AN’s Europe was not deeply immersed in emergency, and AN did not appear as a ‘prophetic’ or ‘providential’ force, but rather as a moderate and careful manager. This may be seen as the result of a search for legitimation in which the party sought to look respectable, but also as a result of ideological change, where the notion of emergency was relegated to a marginal position because politics were no longer conceived of as an activity where survival was at stake, but as a form of ‘regular’ interest representation and pragmatic problem-solving. Thus, the ideological and strategic complemented each other in what was eventually a thorough party transformation.



## CONCLUSION

Moving away from the conceptual core of the far right, this chapter argued that the studied parties (with the exception of AN) drew heavily on the notion of Threat to define Europe. The concept of Threat was considered to be an important trait of far right ideology, because it anchors its ideational core in the realm of emergency and sustains a vision of politics conceived as a struggle for survival, an element that was considered to be distinctive of the far right. In the case of Europe, the parties used it to present Europe and, through it, the concepts of Identity and Liberty as deeply endangered by a series of internal, external and diffuse threats. Its distinctiveness was also highlighted by its absence in AN which, while still sharing with the MSI and FN important ideological aspects with respects to the core, did not anchor Europe in the field of emergency. The threats identified by the parties are briefly summarised in Table 4.

TABLE 4: SUMMATIVE TABLE OF THREAT AND EUROPE

Main concept	Subthemes	Present in		
		MSI	AN	FN
Threat	<b>Internal Threats:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Europe and nations endangered by internal decline</li> </ul>	Present, not dominant Sources of danger: Local communists, immigration, demographic decline, other politicians	Absent	Present throughout Sources: immigration, demographic and economic decline, other politicians
	<b>External Threats:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Europe and nations endangered by hostile foreign actors</li> </ul>	Dominant Sources: USSR, USA	Absent	Present 1980s, 1990s Sources: USSR, USA, Third world and Islam
	<b>Diffuse Threats:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Europe and nations endangered by threats of unidentified or multiple origin</li> </ul>	Absent	Absent	Present 1980s, dominant 1990s onwards Sources: Globalisation and EU

Secondly, the chapter suggested that by constantly referring to threats the political parties created the overall sense of a European crisis which allowed them to present themselves as ‘prophetic’ actors who are aware of dangers and can offer appropriate solutions.

## 6. A EUROPEAN UNION THAT PROTECTS AND DEFENDS: DEFINING THE PROGRAMME FOR ACTION

The previous three chapters have been dedicated to answering the first research question of this thesis, namely: ‘how have far right parties viewed Europe through ideological lenses and how have they incorporated it in their system of beliefs?’ They have shown that far right parties redeployed key concepts in their ideology such as Identity, Liberty and Threat to define Europe and make it a part of their worldview. This chapter moves away from understanding how Europe became a part of far right ideology to tackle the second research question of this thesis, namely, how their ideology informed their positions on the European Union.

Shifting the focus from the parties’ ‘worldview’ to their ‘programme for action’ by exploring the links between the two, the chapter argues that parties relied on the familiar concepts of Identity, Liberty and Threat to define their positions on the concrete project of European integration. These concepts were complemented by the concept of National Interest, which served to integrate them into a narrative that elaborated the relationship between the EU and the nation. It is suggested that the redeployment of these concepts not only in the definition of Europe, but crucially in the parties’ (stated) political practice helps them stress commitment to the core beliefs of their ideology and present themselves as principled actors.

In order to illustrate this argument, the chapter proceeds as follows. It opens by returning to the concept of ideology, and stressing its role as a praxis-oriented worldview and the subsequent expectation that there should be a connection between understandings and policies in ideology. It then shows how this manifested itself in the positions that the MSI/AN and FN expressed on the European Union by focusing on their views on the principle, practice and future of European integration. The final section reflects on the broader effects of what the parties have said about the EU, showing how expressing positions on the EU allowed them to highlight their consistency. In particular, the section

argues that by drawing on familiar concepts in their ideology to express positions on the European Union, and showing how the same concepts apply across time and across issues, the parties renewed their commitment to long-held values and succeeded in presenting themselves as principled actors.

## THOUGHT INTO ACTION: FROM ‘UNDERSTANDING EUROPE’ TO ‘EU POLICIES’

In discussing the history and meaning of ideology, Chapter two highlighted that ideologies can be thought of as ‘systems of political thinking, loose or rigid, deliberate or unintended, through which individuals and groups construct an understanding of the political world they, or those who preoccupy their thoughts, inhabit, and then act on that understanding’ (Freeden 1998a: 3), and stressed that it is necessary to understand ideologies as being both about understanding and, crucially, about acting upon a certain understanding. At the heart of ideology, then, is the idea that what one thinks and how one views the world will inform how one behaves and, conversely, that how one behaves will be justified with reference to what one believes.

While being practice-oriented is by definition a feature of ideology, it becomes most visible in political parties when they present ideas about what they would do once in power. These ideas can be presented in a variety of forms (party manifestoes, campaign speeches, interviews, etc.) but will all be characterised by the fact that they weave together, sometimes implicitly, sometimes openly, a certain view of the world including, as Sainsbury defined it, a vision of the ‘Good Society’ (1980: 10) and the proposed measures to get closer to it by addressing issues that are considered problematic in the parties’ view.

The observation of a close link between how one understands the world and what action one thinks is necessary led, in the earlier stages of this research, to the formulation of a second research question, namely: ‘how has the parties’ view of Europe informed their positions on the European Union?’ The objective of this question was to capture how the parties’ definition of Europe, as well as the concepts that played a role in defining it, informed their concrete policy positions on the EU. In other words, it tried to capture how what they thought about Europe (and the world in general) informed their concrete statements about the European Union.

In order to address this question, this chapter examines more closely what the studied parties thought about European integration specifically. Unlike the previous chapters, which focused on statements that described Europe in its larger meaning and the concepts used to define it, this chapter focuses on what the parties thought should be done, and how, concerning European integration. To do so, it analyses statements about EU policy by looking at three aspects: first, what the parties thought the EU should be for (and, whether indeed, it should exist at all); second, whether they thought that the EU actually fulfilled these objectives; and third, what ideal form the EU should take. These three points broadly cover the principle, practice and future of European integration (Kopecky and Mudde 2002, Vasilopoulou 2011), thus offering a comprehensive overview of the MSI/AN and FN's 'programme for action' with respect to the EU.

Consistent with the idea advanced in Chapter two that, given the close connection between thought and practice in ideology, one could expect similar concepts to be used to both decontest Europe and define positions on the EU, the analysis of party positions on the latter shows that the familiar concepts of Identity, Liberty and Threat helped the parties determine their views and positions on the European Union.

In addition to our familiar concepts, there is another concept that appears recurrently in the parties' discussion of the European Union: the concept of National Interest. The National Interest is both an appraisive and actionable concept: as the former, it serves to describe what is good or beneficial for a given national community; as the latter, it guides policy in such a way that what is beneficial is pursued. It also has no fixed content: while many different actors may appeal to it, there is no one fixed National Interest and what it means will ultimately depend on who is speaking, when they are speaking, how they define the boundaries of the 'national' and what situation they are considering.

Given that far right parties are particularly committed to the nation, it should not come as a surprise that they appeal to this concept in their positions on the EU. Doing what is best for the nation may indeed be viewed as a logical implication of nationalism: because the national community is the highest form of allegiance, its interests should be represented and pursued in political action. As with the previously studied concepts, the parties' use of the National Interest corresponds to a redeployment of a core part of nationalism in a new context and, specifically, in the definition of policies on a new issue. Thus, it constitutes a 'linkage' between the party's ideological core and their political

practice which allows them to claim that their policies are guided primarily by the objective of doing what serves the nation.

While the concept of the National Interest is no less important than the other concepts studied so far, and could have credibly had a chapter dedicated to itself, its study is best carried out in relation to the other concepts of Identity, Liberty and Threat. Because the definition of what constitutes the National Interest is related to what the parties consider to be most important in general (for example, considering it to be in the National Interest to work collectively against a Threat), it appeared more sensible to discuss National Interest in conjunction with the other concepts, rather than as a self-standing idea.

The following sections illustrate empirically how the concepts studied so far, along with the notion of National Interest, manifest themselves in the parties' discussions of the principle, practice and future of European integration. The second part of the chapter argues that the fact that parties redeploy these concepts in their definition of Europe is significant because it allows them to present themselves as consistent and principled agents.

## UNITY IN THE FACE OF DANGER: REASONS, MEANS AND GOALS OF EUROPEAN COLLABORATION

How do the concepts of Identity, Liberty, Threat and National Interest figure in the studied parties' views on the reasons, means and goals of European collaboration? The following sections illustrate how the MSI/AN and FN defined their views on the principle of European collaboration. In particular, they show that especially in the 1980s, because the parties viewed Europe as endangered by several threats, they also thought of European integration as a positive process aimed at overcoming such dangers. This was also justified as being 'in the national interest', highlighting once again the centrality of the nation in far right thinking. Once the most obvious threats disappeared, however, AN and the FN reverted to explaining their positions primarily in terms of what served the National Interest, with the latter often being defined through reference to the notions of Identity and Liberty, but this time as applied to the nation rather than Europe.

## DEFENDING EUROPE, RESTORING POWER: THE PRINCIPLE OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION IN THE MSI

The MSI was broadly positive about the principle of collaboration at the European level, pushing for further EU integration in selected areas and for a united ‘Nation Europe’. Viewing Europe as deeply endangered, it saw European unity as the only way to defend Europe, restore it from decline and, at the same time, serve the national interest of Italy.

The MSI’s view of the aims of European integration was constructed entirely against the backdrop of danger and decline discussed in the previous chapter, leading the party to espouse the idea of European unity as a way to fend off various threats and return Europe and its nations to their past majesty. The MSI’s view of European unity’s dual objective to protect against threats and restore power was well captured by Romualdi (1981), when in an article he argued in favour of the creation of a nation called Europe ‘not as a challenge [...] but as a defence against the false myths and false philosophies, the brutality of the force that sustains them and the assault to our liberties and our lives; and to integrate, with our proud political return, the great forces of the West that is nothing without us’ (Romualdi 1981). The familiar concepts of Liberty and Threat are in this case used not to define Europe, but to explain why it needed to be united: to defend itself, and, most importantly, to be able to make a proud (and powerful) political return.

Restoring the power of Europe, in fact, greatly preoccupied the MSI and appeared frequently in the party’s view of what European unity should achieve. Thus, in response to the decline of European power observed in the previous chapter, the ‘*Spazio Nuovo*’ minority motion in the 1979 Congress highlighted that ‘the concept of Europe must be for the whole party [...] a “myth” based on the observation that only a united, independent and strong Europe [...] will be able to, in front of the current superpowers, not only re-establish order, but also make it possible for the world to exist without the duopolistic logic [sic] in which it has been enclosed for years’ (MSI 1979b); while, the 1987 minority Congress motion ‘*Proposta Italia*’ insisted that the party had to be critical of the current shape of the EU because, ‘while noting its weaknesses and shortcomings, we must help it overcome them. We have to push it to find again the sense of its autonomous personality, to awaken its latent force, to reclaim its full independence, to redeem itself from the American tutelage it has settled into, to aim for the first place in the world’ (MSI

1987c). These quotes highlight the perceived need to restore the ancient power of Europe against its decline and subjection to foreign powers.<sup>26</sup>

The commitment to restoring European power through unity was not entirely guided by marked Europeanism, but also by the view that this was somewhat necessary to preserve the power of the individual nations. As Adriano Romualdi, son of Pino and, albeit only briefly,<sup>27</sup> party intellectual, put it: ‘de Gaulle’s mistake was to speak in the name of France, and not of Europe. It was to think that France could still be great as France. But Italians, the French and even Germans will no longer be able to be great as Italians, French, Germans; they could be so as Europeans’ (cited in P. Romualdi 1979: 53). Therefore, the goal of European integration was not only to restore Europe, but also to restore its constituent nations.

In light of this view, the MSI claimed that the goal of European unity was also perfectly compatible with the party’s broader commitment to serving the nation. Thus, it was also viewed as a way to protect and enhance the National Interest, as the following passage from the 1982 Congress motion ‘*Destra 80*’, brought forward by Romualdi’s faction illustrates:

The guiding line of Italy’s foreign policy must be the defence of its interests of all types, of its privilege, of its traditions, of its civilisation and its culture in all parts of the world and in every circumstance.

Firstly, promoting with any initiative an ever-growing political integration within the European community and its integration in an increasingly global political strategy of Western countries. The world has been dominated for years by the initiative of international communism – in crisis but constantly advancing – guided by Soviet Russia [...] transforming the free world in an encircled fortress [...]. In such a world there is no other possibility to defend oneself than integrating and fully coordinating our interests and our initiatives with those of the other free and independent countries that wish to stay so. This

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<sup>26</sup> While I cite minority motions here, the majority motions expressed rather similar points. For example, the 1979 majority motion, echoing the minority one in discussing the uncertain world balance, suggested that ‘it is also a crisis that could have positive outcomes as far as Europe is concerned, as long as Europe realises that it is a continent, that it does not have to accept to be tied down by the stumps of Yalta, that it has in its hands the instruments to establish its autonomy, to have the obligation and, even the interest, to look globally to its peoples [...] and to be able to carry the weight of the destiny of the world [...]’ (MSI 1979a)

<sup>27</sup> Adriano Romualdi died in a car accident in 1973, aged 32.

cannot mean trying to protect fraudulently – often operating outside the Community's rules, as many governments, including ours, do – our particular interests and our rights of initiative. But, on the contrary, defending them better, with intelligence and tenacity, in an open debate – even harsh if necessary – with the initiatives and interests of others [...] (1982c)

The passage above demonstrates very well how European integration was considered a primary factor in serving the national interest of Italy. First of all, it identifies 'the pursuit of the national interest' as the guiding principle in foreign policy. Secondly, it immediately identifies the project of European integration as the first initiative to promote in the name of this principle. Thirdly, and in line with what was mentioned before, this is justified on the grounds of a Threat facing Europe and its nations, showing how Threat represents the nexus between the 'worldview' and the 'programme for action'. A final point of interest worth noting, however, is that integration requires reciprocity and loyalty, to ensure that all national interests are respected and pursued in concert with others, rather than at their expense.

The MSI also discussed how Europe should be reformed in order to achieve these goals. Thus, they stressed a series of measures of both a political and a structural nature to promote a form of integration that would ensure the Community fulfilled its purpose. For example, while remaining sceptical of Parliamentarism (e.g., Almirante 1978: 46), they suggested at various points to strengthen the European Parliament (MSI 1979a, MSI 1982a), create a European executive (MSI 1979d, MSI 1990d), establish an independent foreign and defence policy (see amongst others MSI 1979d, MSI 1987d, Gasparri 1988, MSI 1990d) and promote social measures to protect European workers living in countries different from their own (Almirante 1978: 49-50). While it is obvious that many of these measures would have served their own political interests or were guided by their national battles,<sup>28</sup> they also demonstrate a will to engage with the existing structures of the EU to pursue the national interest.

Above all, the MSI harboured a belief that the project of European integration should lead towards a political Europe, a free 'Nation Europe' that would stand as a third way between the USSR and the USA, and defend the identities and liberty of its

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<sup>28</sup> For example, the focus on the protection of workers in the community can be seen as part of the MSI's long-standing commitment to protecting Italian nationals abroad, while the focus on a stronger Parliament can be seen as guided by their will to have an impact on the decisions of the community through their MEPs.



constituent nations. This ‘end point’ of European integration will be discussed in the concluding section on normative views of the European project.

## SERVING THE NATION THROUGH EUROPEAN ACTION: AN’S SUPPORT FOR THE PRINCIPLE OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

Because AN did not view Europe as deeply endangered, its view of the principle of European integration focused less on the notion of Threat and more on what positive goals European unity could achieve. In particular, like the MSI, AN viewed European integration as a way to solve issues that nations alone could not solve, although it did not view these issues as threats. Note, however, that AN also dedicated little time to discussing the principle of European integration, preferring to focus on the direction of integration instead. Thus, while suggesting that European integration was indeed desirable in principle, AN did not explain why in much detail.

The limited evidence about AN’s view of the principle of European integration suggests that underlying the party’s support for it was a strong sense of the interdependence of European states and the realisation that further integration made it possible to solve issues that nations alone could not tackle. This was well illustrated in a 1996 document by Mirko Tremaglia, an historical MSI and important AN figure, called ‘Right means Europe’. The article stressed the Italian Right’s long-standing commitment to European integration and said that

we consider it important to maintain the patrimony acquired up until now on the path to integration and we believe that, now more than ever, the events in our Continent pass through the respect and valorisation of History, of traditions, of the peculiarity of nations, as through the coordination of the economic, social, financial interest of the individual European countries.

Thus we respond to the needs of unity and collaboration of the European states in an ample world scene, rocked by continuous disaggregating impulses, to reach a Union based on justice, on solidarity, recognising the principle of subsidiarity in the relationship between the Union and the national States.  
(Tremaglia 1996)

Tremaglia here shows how European integration was, in the eyes of the party, a key supporting mechanism for member states, allowing them to tackle issues such as

globalisation (AN 1999, Carrino 2008), complex foreign policy issues (AN 1994b, AN 2002) and even long-standing national issues (such as the gap between the North and South of Italy: e.g., AN 2001) where national action would be insufficient. In this sense, it served the national interest by performing a crucial problem-solving role for the nation.

While less concerned with threats, even for AN the EU was meant to act as a protective force. In this sense, its action was to be partially guided by the need to defend Europe from external pressures, as the following passage from the *Secolo d'Italia* highlights:

Yet, the leading role of the Indian and Chinese subcontinents, and the end of the bipolar opposition between East and West, should push the European Nations towards the constitution of a strong and united political subject that can start to rediscover European identity as a founding element of political institutions. [...]

Given these experiences and in the presence of such changes of perspectives, it is necessary to start a new season of institutional reforms to relaunch the debate on the idea of European unity, aware that it will be necessary to safeguard the identity, exalting their roots, of the single peoples and of all the nations. Starting from the belief that only a cohesive and united continent will be able to play a leading part in the coming future scenarios. (Pedrizzi 2006)

Pedrizzi's passage, beyond showing the EU as force whose principle should be to protect, is also interesting because it gives a sense of what needed to be protected. In line with the previous chapters, what the party seems to value above all is a sense of power supported by a strong identity, showing how the concepts that play out in the definition of Europe also serve to guide action in the EU. While these concepts are not defined here as gravely endangered, they do appear in need of being rediscovered in European integration.

As with the MSI, the principle of European integration did not appear to contradict the National Interest, but rather to complement it. This assessment was further stressed by the understanding that Europe was indeed an arena where the National Interest should be pursued, as the 2004 programme highlighted when it suggested that previous Italian governments wrongly thought that 'fidelity to this [European] ideal meant renouncing the protection of legitimate political, social and economic interests of the Italian nation', while both could be pursued together at the European level, as the successful experience of countries such as France, Great Britain and Germany demonstrated (AN 2004).

With this in mind, the party proposed a variety of measures for the future of Europe, pointing towards the need for further integration in key areas such as defence, foreign policy and fiscal policy. Importantly, for AN, as for the MSI, this should lead towards a more ‘political’ form of Europe, an idea which will be discussed along with the MSI’s view of the future of Europe in the closing section of this chapter.

## EUROPEAN INTERESTS TO NATIONAL INTEREST: THE FN’S CHANGING VIEWS ON THE PRINCIPLE OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

The FN’s position on the desirability of European integration, and especially on its form, shifted visibly over time. If in the 1980s the party was supportive of further European integration in the name of unity before a common danger and as a means to restore European power, from the 1990s onwards it reverted to judging the utility of the European project exclusively on its ability to serve the National Interest, partially explaining why the FN turned against the European Union.

In the 1980s, like the MSI, the FN constructed its positions on the principle of European integration against the backdrop of a threat to the continent, viewing European unity as a form of protection from the outside world. In fact, the previous chapter showed that the FN considered Europe to be encircled by enemy forces, which in turn led it to speak in favour of the political integration of Europe. This is well illustrated by the following passage from Jean-Marie Le Pen’s book *‘Les Français d’abord’*:

No country has managed to establish its hegemony on Europe. Many have tried. All have written pages of glory. [...] The groundwork has been done and one can now accept the creation of a united Europe in front of external threats. One never associates by natural reflex. When one creates a society, it is because one does not have the means to act alone. It is certain that the threat of Soviet Communism (and the dangers of disintegration by subversion it entails) is also Europe’s great chance. It can allow it to define itself precisely against a certain form of danger. One can obtain a huge consensus, reinforced by the fact that Europeans are aware of the fact that they are partially occupied by the Soviet Union, while the French, Spanish or others, by themselves, do not feel this. [...] (Le Pen 1984: 155-156)

Far from being an isolated case of support for European integration, this vision was pervasive in party documents at the time. Thus, Le Pen repeated the same point in a more succinct fashion elsewhere, for example later in the book, when he claimed that ‘there will be no Europe unless it is destined to become a Nation. Now this nation cannot be created if not to defend itself (and God knows that Europe is threatened) against external dangers’ (1984: 164), and again in other documents, such as the 1989 *La Lettre* editorial ‘For a Europe of the Peoples’ in which he insisted that ‘the unity of Europe is necessary because what is at stake is our survival, our independence, our identity and our culture, our economic and social capacity. Europe is faced with dangers: diplomatic and military from the USSR; demographic from the third world and Islamic expansionism; in its vitality by decreasing birth rates, criminality, drugs, AIDS’ (Le Pen 1989). So, underlying the FN’s view of European unity was firstly, the recognition of a shared heritage among European nations, and secondly, the feeling that there was a Threat being posed to the nations of Europe which forced them to unite because they lacked ‘the means to act alone’. European unity, then, appeared as a form of protection for the individual nations of Europe and for the continent as a whole.

Because the FN also saw Europe as in decline, it followed the MSI in its assessment of European integration as a means to restore European power. Combining the concepts of Liberty and Threat by presenting the former as endangered by the latter, this view was brought forward particularly by Mégret, who insisted on the need for Europeans to unite in the name of the ‘common benefit’ of ‘power’ (Mégret 1992). European unity, then, was considered desirable as a way to create a European ‘*pôle de puissance*’, which would be able to stand up to the USA and the USSR and ensure that Europe and its nations ‘find anew the power they have lost in the fratricidal wars they fought against one another and that they left the USA and the USSR to arbitrate’ (FN 1991: 118).

If the early documents of the FN appear to be committed to some form of European unity guided by the need to defend Europe’s survival and enhance its power, the FN’s commitment was conditional upon this being positive for France. As the previous paragraph showed, in fact, the FN viewed unity as a necessity for the protection of the individual nations, suggesting that its support for European unity was strictly delimited. Thus, while its declared policy was one of defending the European interest, the

underlying assumption was that this would allow for (and should indeed be dependent on) the defence of the National Interest.

The importance of this notion of National Interest became particularly visible and explicit in the years following the end of the Cold War, when the logic of unity in the face of danger disappeared, leaving the National Interest as the principal objective of the FN's European policy. This was evident in Le Pen's view that European unity should be pursued only 'to the extent that it is indispensable to the nations that have constituted it' (Le Pen 1994). This, in turn, led the FN to propose increasingly less ambitious measures to adopt at the European level and to focus exclusively on European integration as a means to pursue 'mutually beneficial' projects. While this could occasionally lead to proposing measures such as a common currency (but not a shared one; e.g., Le Pen 1998, FN 1999), European integration only made sense, in the words of the 2009 programme (which is almost the same as the wording of Lang 2004), 'if it creates jobs, riches; if it creates the conditions for more security and for peace for the peoples of Europe first' (FN 2009).

In conclusion, the talk of creating Europe as a '*puissance*' or as a 'nation' united against the common enemy disappeared and relegated Europe to a mere, loose project of integration aimed at facilitating bilateral and multilateral collaborations serving the individual nations' interests. The form that this Europe should take will be discussed later on. The next section, for now, turns to a discussion of the assessment of the EU, on the grounds of this view of what aims European integration should pursue.

## PERFECTIBLE UNION OR FAILED EXPERIMENT? ASSESSING EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

The previous section showed how different concepts played into the parties' positive assessment of the idea of uniting Europe. In the 1980s, the parties adopted a positive view of European integration, viewing it as a way to unite in the face of a common threat, return Europe to its past splendour and, as a result, serve the National Interest by acting at a higher level. From the 1990s, the rationale of European unity as a means to serve the National Interest became more visible and indeed dominant in the parties' positions, with AN viewing the EU as a way to solve issues and pursue both the National and European

interest, and the FN focusing exclusively on the National Interest and viewing European integration primarily as a ‘zero-sum game’.

Having established why, and under what conditions, the studied parties considered European integration desirable, the aim of this section is to see how the MSI/AN and FN assessed European integration. It focuses on whether they considered the EU to be fit for purpose, and on which grounds they justified their positions. Once again, our parties took divergent stances. While they all broadly agreed that the EU was not perfectly designed to fulfil the goals mentioned in the previous section, the MSI/AN still saw it as a perfectible structure, as opposed to the FN who especially from the 1990s onwards presented it as completely unsalvageable in its current form, and indeed, actively threatening.

#### NEITHER UNITED, NOR POWERFUL: THE ROOTS OF THE MSI’S NEGATIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE FORM AND DIRECTION OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

The MSI built its assessment of the European Union as a concrete project by referring to the ideas expressed earlier that European unity should be aimed at the three interlinked objectives of defending Europe, restoring its power and serving Italy. While the party considered the EU a first step towards the political integration of the continent, it also considered that the EU did not achieve the party’s goals and presented some important shortcomings in both institutional and policy terms. Thus, it assessed its current form in a mostly negative way, without, however, rejecting it completely.

Starting with the view that the EU should allow for the common defence of Europe and the pursuit of power, the EU’s form was considered by the party as largely inadequate. This was imputed to a variety of factors, ranging from the EU’s inability to identify shared interests to its imperfect institutional structure. The first point is well captured by Romualdi in his 1979 *Intervista sull’Europa*, when he stressed that the EU was far from being a ‘Nation Europe’ because petty localised interests still prevailed:

The European Parliament directly elected by the European people is born, but political unity is still far away, and so is the Nation Europe. Not because nationalisms are still alive. But exactly for the opposite reason. Because nationalisms have been replaced by the low and petty particular interests. The interests of individuals, of economic groups or multinational companies, and especially

of parties and their internationals. To De Gaulle's [sic] Europe of the Homelands – still charged with chauvinism, but at least animated by a sentiment of grandeur and pride (however anachronistic and contradictory) – the bad European leading classes have only been able to oppose a Europe of the parties, of their interests and their bureaucracy, on the one hand; and on the other, the Europe of technocracy, experts and employees answerable only to themselves. That is, the Europe of nothing and no one. (Romualdi 1979: 54)

The prevalence of such localised interests most clearly limited the EU's ability to unite in front of a common threat because it limited Europe's ability to present itself as a unified bloc in front of the East (MSI 1982a), leaving it, in addition, largely 'inexistent' in world politics (1987d). In this sense, it clearly failed to defend Europe from external enemies or restore its power, the two main goals of integration in the MSI's view.

The inability to overcome localised interests was partially blamed on the EU's institutional structure, which the MSI considered inadequate to pursue a true European unity. The main lines of this opposition were well expressed by Rallo in the introduction to Almirante's '*Intervista sull'Eurodestra*', when he said that

on the institutional plane, while admitting that the current structures of the community may constitute the instrument for further steps forward on the path of European integration, the Eurodestra does not identify itself with them, because it considers that Europe is something rather different than a mere super-parliament destined to be the mouthpiece for the internal contradictions of Member States; because it believes that Europe is something more than a common market that at times disregards the economic interests of the associated peoples, creating in addition dangerous anti-European moods in certain Countries in our Continent. Equally, the Eurodestra does not identify with old federalism, as Europe cannot be a jumble of semi-powerful states, deprived of a true unifying glue, open to the political and financial speculations of foreign powers. (Almirante 1978: 11)

The passage summarises several of the critiques the party raised against the EU's form throughout the years. While acknowledging that the EU could be thought of as a first step on the path towards integration, Rallo here suggests that it is unable to create a unified front of Europeans because of the weakness of the institutions and the primarily economic form of integration. The 1987 Congress motion '*Proposta Italia*' struck a familiar chord when it said that

we cannot share the utilitarian and mercantile level on which the life of the European organisms is developed, and we do not approve its political structures, inspired by a type of parliamentarism in which inconclusiveness and partisan offshoots and subjections coming from different countries end up dominating. Neither can we accept the passivity with which the EEC adapts itself to a secondary role in the world [...] (MSI 1987c; see also MSI 1990d for a similar view).

The 1987 MSI programme is particularly interesting here because it highlights all the shortcomings of EU integration: its non-unitary political structures, its resignation to a secondary role in world politics and, most importantly, its primarily economic character which exacerbated its loss of power.

The MSI's main area of critique of the EU, in fact, concerned its dominant economic character which, in the MSI's view, limited its ability to address the real threats that faced Europe. In particular, a purely economic form of integration did not make Europe free in any meaningful way, and failed to provide the necessary tools to defend it from external enemies. It also led to the creation of a 'Europe of the merchants' rather than a 'political Europe' based on local identities. Criticism of the EU as a purely economic construction which limited the pursuit of more important, political goals appeared in the course of various debates, including that on the EU's incorporation of Spain and Portugal (Mantovani 1985) and the debate on Maastricht. Its main points are well outlined in the following passage by Maurizio Gasparri, who claimed that 'we, who have always believed in Europe, will certainly not oppose integration processes. But we do not want a Europe of free trade – we do not want a Europe of monetary systems and finance. We look at what must precede currencies and trades. We look at political integration, at the military defence of our Europe, to the cultural identity of our land' (Gasparri 1988). Gasparri, here discussing the advent of a European economic and monetary union, raises a number of points that clarify the MSI's critique of the EU as an excessively economic construction, focused on 'monetary systems and finance' rather than on what precedes them. In particular, he pits this type of economic integration, that as a later document puts it, 'betrays the duties that geography, politics and destiny have given to the continent' (Gasparri 1993), against a more desirable form of political integration based on the defence of Europe and its heritage, and its return to power.

Even though the MSI criticised the EU as a victim of petty interests, it should be noted that they were not unfamiliar with critiques based on Italy's national interest. For



example, a 1982 minority motion criticised the Common Agricultural Policy because it forced Italy's south to compete with a more productive northern Europe (MSI 1982b). This point was included in the 1983 programme, although, rather than blaming the EU itself, the programme blamed the Italian political class for being unable to protect Italian goods (MSI 1983). Further along the line, Maastricht was also heavily criticised by the party as having negative implications for Italy because it created an unequal relationship with European partners and had negative effects on the Italian economy, all the while not presenting a sufficiently 'political' form of integration (Gasparri 1993, Toppi 1994, MSI 1994). In this sense, the MSI was also clearly concerned with ensuring that European integration did not harm Italy.

Overall, it should be noted that, while the MSI did adopt a critical stance on the shape of the EU, it never fully rejected the idea of uniting Europe, and seemed to be mostly interested in developing the EU in a different direction. What direction it should have taken will be discussed in the final part of this empirical section.

#### A PERFECTIBLE UNION: THE AN'S CRITICAL STANCE ON THE SHAPE OF THE EU

AN, the previous section argued, held a positive view of the principle of EU integration, seeing it primarily as a means to solve issues that the nations alone could not address. This also guided its view of the European Union: while recognising its utility, AN also adopted a critical stance when the EU failed to ensure an acceptable level of protection, although, importantly, this never led the party to reject it completely.

First of all, it is important to stress that AN viewed the EU as an important achievement which should be preserved. The previously cited Tremaglia for example, highlighted the need to 'maintain what has been achieved up until now' (1996), while in 2002 Fini argued that European citizens did not oppose a growing Europe but that they were 'in favour of further European integration in those sectors in which only the Union's action, and not that of the individual states, can achieve satisfactory results' (Parlato 2002). The 2004 programme even stressed how the introduction of the Euro ended the first phase of the European construction, achieving the 'perhaps most extraordinary result of the 20<sup>th</sup> century' of 'removing the bloody borders which for centuries had separated the peoples and economies of Western Europe' (AN 2004). Thus, the EU, however

imperfect, was seen as a desirable element of European politics.

While positive about the overall project, AN was also more critical in terms of its assessment of the nature of European integration, considering that, in many cases, it did not fulfil its role of problem solver and even violated key values. It is here that it is possible to observe the reappearance of the concepts of Identity and Liberty studied in the previous chapters, as well as their juxtaposition with the concept of National Interest. Like the MSI, AN criticised the EU's 'neo-Enlightenment' and '*dirigiste*' form which focused on economics while ignoring key political principles such as democracy and national cultures (AN 1994b, AN 2004). More importantly, it questioned the extent to which the EU served Italy's (or even Europe's) interests in a balanced manner. In fact, although AN accepted the need for compromise, it suggested that Italy was compromising much more than other countries, leading to negative consequences for the country's social and economic development (Tremaglia 1996, Alemanno 2000, AN 2002, AN 2004).

The form that AN's criticism of the EU took is described in the following editorial by Selva, published in the *Secolo d'Italia* and tellingly called 'If the European dream becomes a nightmare':

I confess to feeling by now as a "defrocked priest", due to the loss of faith in "this Europe". I still celebrate "European Masses" [...] but the dream of a Community seeking to become the United States of Europe, [...] must be reviewed: in fact, the only great human and political victory of our community has been that of making war amongst us impossible and making us enjoy peace for half a century [...].

But let us return to the dream that should have become a reality and that, on the contrary, almost transforms into a nightmare: the conflict that is ever more evident between the European institutions and the political will of European peoples. When the citizens in France and the Netherlands [...] do not see in the institutions the power to solve the issues of globalisation and not even of national economy, they vote with anger against the European positions of the governments they have elected.

The bureaucratisation of the institutions has become not a simplification of the relationship between the community and individual citizens, but an obstacle. [...]

Following the rhetoric of a "Political Europe of the future" [...] we Italians did the opposite of the French and Germans, and especially of the English: we privileged European politics over

the defence of the national interest. I do not mean to say that this has not given us some advantages [...], but I do say that we must no longer talk about European “unity” without first defending the “diversity” of interests and of the national “values”. (Selva 2005)

Written at a difficult time for the EU, following the French and Dutch ‘No’ votes on the Constitutional Treaty, this passage helps highlight the tension between what AN saw as the goal of European integration and the EU’s ability to fulfil it. It was mentioned before that AN viewed European integration as necessary to protect the national interest through action at the European level. This would be done by protecting the cultures and nations of Europe (or, in the language used in the previous chapters, its Identity), something which the passage above suggests the EU was no longer able to do. Thus, the EU was unable to tackle globalisation and could also no longer ensure prosperity and security. This also leads, in Selva’s view, to a break between the EU and its constituent nations, raising issues of democracy. What is perhaps most interesting about the article, however, is the perspective from which it is delivered. Selva criticises the EU on a wide range of grounds, essentially suggesting that it has failed to deliver on its own promises. The overwhelming sense, however, is one of disappointment rather than anger, the regret of a former convert in seeing that the project one had been pursuing has fallen short. This suggests that the AN, even when being critical, remained committed to European integration as a project, considering it necessary to reform it, even radically if necessary, but not abandon it *in toto* as the FN did.

#### THE EU AS A FAILED PROJECT: THE FN’S NEGATIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE FORM AND PRACTICE OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

The FN’s assessment of the EU as a concrete project of European collaboration is, and has been since the mid-1980s, overwhelmingly negative. While the party adopted a more nuanced stance in the early 1980s (e.g., FN 1981; Le Pen 1984, 1985), and occasionally welcomed the general principle of integration as well as specific EU initiatives (e.g., Mégret 1992 on the single market), overall it has tended to see the EU as a deeply flawed project which does not conform with its view of what European unity should achieve, and particularly with the imperative to act as a protective force.

The FN’s assessment of the European Union was initially positive, with the party seeing it as a first step towards further European unification in the face of danger. For

example, the 1979 programme of the *Union Française pour l'Europe* defined the EU as 'a decisive step' towards the European confederation they saw as desirable. Similarly, the 1985 programme presented by Le Pen expressed the importance of 'reaffirming the reality of the Europe founded on the homelands of the EEC' (Le Pen 1985: 189).

While generally supportive of the overall project, already in its early years the FN had its reservations about the functioning of the EU, considering (like the MSI) that it was insufficiently ambitious in its political scope. In the same passage that speaks of the importance of 'reaffirming the reality of the Europe founded on the homelands of the EEC', Le Pen also advanced a critical view of European integration stating the following:

### **Return Europe to its true dimension**

For as long as France and Europe accept to be shamed by certain Third World countries, instruments of Soviet hegemony, they will not be able to forge a political will and the projects of European unity will remain vague hopes.

A hope was born with the Coal and Steel treaty of 1950, the Treaty of Rome in 1957 and the Euratom in 1958. Today, this hope has been let down, called into question.

From one European summit to another, the Community sinks, it no longer solves issues [...].

Nor has it given itself the financial and regulatory means for the enlargement.

The European Parliament too often looks like an assembly responsive to Marxist dialectics and to the Third-Worldist ideology.

The European Commission is an organism influenced by bureaucratic socialism.

No, this is not what Europe is, it is not only the Europe of merchants, of trade unions, of theoreticians and of technocrats.

It is an extra-millenary community of destiny, whose construction, the last great design of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, can give our youth a future commensurate to its legitimate ambitions. (Le Pen 1985: 188-189)

Like the MSI, Le Pen presents a critique of the EU as a 'Europe of merchants' that has abandoned all political will. While acknowledging that the EU had started on the right footing, the passage then proceeds to explain where it all went wrong, attacking in turn the Parliament, the Commission and the overall form of the project, considered to be a

‘betrayal’ of the real Europe. The domination of these institutions clearly carries negative implications, as they are unlikely to be committed to restoring Europe’s power by making it into a body ‘commensurate’ to the ‘legitimate ambitions’ of the European youth.

Following an early phase of moderate criticism, the Single European Act, the concrete experience of FN members as MEPs, the decline of Communism and the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty led the FN to adopt an increasingly oppositional stance to the EU, making it, as the previous chapter has demonstrated, a Threat in itself (on this evolution, see Reungoat 2012: 102-104). As such, the FN began to oppose it principally on three (often mixed) grounds which recall the concepts studied in the previous chapters, as well as their reasons to support the general principle of integration mentioned earlier.

First of all, the EU was assessed negatively as a body that harmed identities by removing (or shifting) established physical and symbolic boundaries between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’, thus violating what should have been its key role of acting as a protective force. Under this heading, the EU was presented, for example, as a force that facilitated immigration (both intra-EU and extra-EU: e.g. FN 2002, FN 2012a, Gollnisch 2006, Le Chevallier 1988, Le Pen 2016), empowered regions (e.g., FN 2002, Le Pen 2003) and destroyed national diversity through harmonisation (e.g., FN 1991: 116, FN 2007, Mégret 1989b).

Secondly, the FN opposed the current form of European integration by claiming that the EU violated the fundamental principle of Liberty by removing power from its rightful holders. Drawing on the notions of autonomy and self-rule, this form of opposition encompassed attacks on the primacy of EU law, on the ‘unelected Brussels bureaucrats’ and on the EU more generally as diminishing the sovereignty of its constituent members (e.g., FN 1999, FN 2012a, Le Pen 2017b; see also Chapter five).

Finally, the FN also developed an economic line of critique which suggested that the EU created poverty in its members, thus violating their national interest and harming their long-term chances of survival. This was built by criticising both generic and specific aspects of EU policy such as its flair for liberalisation, the Common Agricultural Policy and especially the Euro, defined in a speech as an ‘occupation currency’ (Le Pen 1998; on this third line of critique, see also for example FN 1999, FN 2012a, Le Pen 2007).

The reasons for the FN's negative assessment of the EU are well illustrated in a six-page-long Q&A published on *Français d'abord* in 1999, whose main axes of reasoning are presented below (all stresses in original):

**Q: We must construct a federal Europe because there is a European civilisation.**

Answer: The existence of a community of civilisation that brings European peoples together is not contested [...]

- 1) But a civilisation is not a nation: [...]
- 2) The EU in any case forgets the founding values of our civilisation:
  - European civilisation is precisely that of the **free and equal peoples**. That is the civilisation of the diversity of national cultures. A federal Europe would negate this diversity. [...]

**Q: It is necessary to create a federal Europe to avoid war in Europe. Europe is peace.**

A:

- 1) But it is not the European construction that has granted peace in Europe. [...]
- 2) This Europe might, alas, lead us to war. According to the Maastricht Treaty, the passage to the euro is 'irreversible' [...]. Europe will then have to use force to prevent a people from retrieving its freedom.
- 3) The best way to avoid aggressive nationalism, is precisely to respect the liberty of nations. [...]

**Q: But we still have the possibility to control what happens at the European level.**

A:

- 1) But we control nothing! In the past, it was necessary to have the **unanimous agreement** of all states to pass a European law [...]. Today, if there is a majority, it is possible to impose on a people what it does not want [...]
- 2) In several areas, the power belongs to unelected technocrats! The French Parliament becomes a mere registration chamber of the laws made in Brussels. Democracy [...] disappears in favour of the power of 'experts'.

**Q: It is necessary to create a federal Europe because European economies are more and more interdependent.**

A:

1) But the economy is not in charge of politics [...] In democracy and in the Republican setting, the primacy of politics is, simply, the possibility for the people to choose the economic, foreign, social policy that it prefers [...]

**Q: The Euro is the sharing of a monetary sovereignty we had lost.**

But by definition, sovereignty is ‘unconditional power’, which means it is indivisible: it either is, or is not. [...] Sharing sovereignty means not being sovereign. [...] (FN 1999)

Following these first four pages dedicated to identity and sovereignty, the remaining two pages of the dossier deal more specifically with the euro as a complex new currency which will penalise citizens, endangering their savings and their purchasing power. The Q&A, structured as a conversation between a humanised, intelligent-looking flame (the party’s logo) and three distinctively dark-skinned mobsters,<sup>29</sup> thus highlights all the lines of criticism of the EU. In the eyes of the FN, it is a boundary-removing body, an economically faulty construction and, the dominant theme here, a body that removes control from the nation and its politics, which it replaces with the domination of bureaucracy, economics and administration.

The FN’s message on why it opposed European integration has remained constant ever since. Even with the change of leadership, the overall arguments have remained rather similar, as a comparison between the preceding 1999 passage and the article below from the party magazine *Nations Presse Magazine* (created in 2010 to support Marine Le Pen’s candidacy for the leadership of the party) will illustrate:

Faced with this situation, while they could have been an anchor to safeguard our jobs, our social protection, our public services and our cultures, Europe and its Brussels Commission have forced upon the people a European model:

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<sup>29</sup> The men’s profession is not indicated; however, the fact that they are all wearing sunglasses, that one of them is wearing a suit, one is smoking a sizeable cigar and the third has a ponytail and a large, hoop shaped earring, lead them to bear a strong resemblance to mafioso imagery.

- Drifting geographically, first East, up to Asia Minor with the desired accession of Turkey
- Drifting economically towards unfettered free trade
- Drifting politically through the slow construction of a EUSSR (Aliot 2011)

In short, Louis Aliot, the magazine director, FN politician and partner of Le Pen, criticises the EU for failing to fulfil its protective function. In a similar vein, in a 2010 speech, Marine Le Pen, not yet president of the party, stressed how

the French have said no this European constitution, that is, to a specific conception of Europe, that which has been dominating for decades: a Europe of rapacious banks, where cash is king; of generalised deregulation; of the destruction of public services and of States; a Europe open without protection to all the winds of globalisation, to all migrations, a Europe of the standardisation of languages and cultures, of their alignment to the Anglo-American; a Europe without nations, without peoples, without democracy, entrusted to a small arrogant and omnipotent caste. (Le Pen 2010)

The essentials, then, as the passages show, remain largely the same. Since the end of the 1980s and early 1990s in particular, the EU is assessed negatively as a body with unclear boundaries (and which removes the ones that are present), an economically unprosperous area and a bureaucratic nightmare removing political powers from its rightful holders.

One area of change in the FN's criticism of the EU is how it proposes to deal with it, with the party oscillating between leaving the EU and reforming it. The party has in fact been rather ambivalent on this, supporting in turn exit from the EU project as a whole (FN 2002), a simple renegotiation with no mention of exit (FN 2007 and the post-2017 presidential campaign) or a renegotiation with a possibility of exit if this does not go in the right direction (FN 2012a, FN 2017). As for what an 'ideal' renegotiated Europe would look like, this is for the last section to discuss.

## CONFEDERAL? YES, BUT HOW? CONSIDERING THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

The previous sections have shown that none of the parties here studied displayed unflinching support for European integration. All three, in fact, demonstrated a measure of scepticism concerning the functioning of the project, although their criticism did not lead to the same



conclusions. Thus, the Italian parties, while critical of the current shape of the EU, viewed it as perfectible. The Front National, on the other hand, shifted from viewing it as imperfect but valuable to rejecting it completely as a failed and dangerous project in need of complete overhaul.

In light of this critical assessment brought forward by the parties, this section explores how they thought an ideal EU would look. It shows that while all parties advocated a confederal project of European integration, they took divergent stances on the extent to which it should be integrated and what areas it should prioritise. Thus, the MSI pushed for a ‘political’ Nation Europe with a strong common foreign and defence policy, while AN supported a confederal model guided by the principle of subsidiarity. The FN always supported a confederal model of European integration; however, it moved from a position similar to that of the MSI to one that supported only loose forms of European collaboration.

#### *EUROPA NAZIONE*: THE MSI’S UNITED AND POWERFUL (CONFEDERAL) EUROPE

To the MSI, the ideal Europe should be ‘One, free, self-sufficient’ (MSI 1982a), guided by the imperative of power in the external world, but respectful of national individualities. The MSI’s ideal of European unity mirrored closely what it thought Europe should be for and was heavily indebted to the ideas and language of Anfuso, whose idea of Europe was discussed in Chapter three. Guided by the view that European integration should be aimed at defending Europe and restoring power, when speaking of the endpoint of European integration, the MSI argued that Europe should become a ‘political’ and united ‘Nation Europe’, able to act decisively on the world stage as a third way between the capitalist USA and the communist USSR. In the MSI’s view, only such a form of European unity would allow the EU to fulfil its goals. As the party’s 1987 programme most clearly put it, the MSI wanted

a politically, economically and militarily integrated Europe, a united Europe as an influencing factor for peace and stability; it will compete with the USA in maintaining freedom and civilisation; a Europe that cannot and must not be subject to limitations, discriminations or privileges and that has its full rights in the Western formation, which can be determinant in the choices of the alliance, to fulfil its responsibility in the world,

especially in the Mediterranean, in the Third World and in Latin America. (MSI 1987d)

The passage ties together what were discussed at the beginning of this chapter as the ‘aims’ of Europe and the shape that it should take. First of all, it identifies the need for a ‘politically, economically and militarily integrated Europe’, suggesting that European integration should go further than it had at the time. Secondly, it stresses the view of Europe as one that is fully free from external control and able to be determinant in world politics: in other words, an autonomous and powerful Europe. The MSI’s ‘Nation Europe’, then, could be seen primarily as a foreign policy actor, able to project power in the external realm and, expected, with time and further political integration, to become ‘an equal pole of the USA and the USSR’ (MSI 1990d).

As far as the form that integration should take, while adopting the language of a ‘Nation Europe’, the MSI viewed the ideal form of integration as a confederal one. MSI activist Michele Rallo discussed this most clearly in the opening sections of the *Intervista sull’Eurodestra*, when he highlighted that the party’s ‘Nation Europe’ was neither a centralised project of European integration nor a federal ‘levelling’ one, but a confederal project in which Europe would be ‘united and integrated’ while ‘maintaining intact the national individualities that make it up’ (in Almirante 1978: 9-10). In other words, the ideal Europe would be guided by the imperatives of Liberty and Identity, restoring the power of European nations all the while respecting their individualities by adopting a confederal form.

#### *EUROPA DELLE PATRIE*: AN’S CONFEDERAL BUT INTEGRATED UNION

AN’s vision for the future of Europe was marked by both breaks and continuities with the MSI’s. In fact, while it maintained the MSI’s commitment to a confederal and more ‘political’ Europe, in which the sovereignty and national interests of individual nations would be respected, it also broke with tradition by distancing itself from the idea that European integration should be guided by action against external enemies, and by shifting the intellectual references for its ideal of Europe.

The presence of both breaks and continuities could already be observed in the party’s first manifestoes, in which ideas of the MSI remained present, but were repackaged to fit in with the conservative political lineage of de Gaulle. As far as

continuity was concerned, the programmes stressed the need for the EU to become a more political confederation of states. At the same time, the party abandoned the language of 'Nation Europe' that it had inherited from fascist diplomat Anfuso and adopted the Gaullist formula of 'Europe of the Homelands'.<sup>30</sup> Thus, the 1994 EU manifesto stressed that the party drew its inspiration from de Gaulle's project, while the national programme presented the AN's view of an ideal Europe as a

Europe that is not merely a space of free trade, an area tied together by mere economic interests, but a Confederation of diverse and sovereign states, that can find together the strength and will to give themselves a foreign or security policy, a unity of aims, of directives and laws that guarantee the primary efficacy of "politics", not subordinated to economics as a system that is an end in itself. (AN 1994a)

While bearing several similarities with the MSI's vision in that it stresses the confederal and political nature of an ideal Europe, it is also notable that the passage highlights the need for the states to remain 'sovereign', a term rarely used by the MSI in this context but key to de Gaulle's vision. Thus, the party successfully maintained a continuity of ideas with the past by stressing the need for a powerful and confederal Europe, as well as inserting itself into a different ideological realm by appealing to a different intellectual tradition.

AN remained attached to this confederal and political project even in following years, although, unlike the MSI, it did not consider this political Europe as necessary to defend Europeans from the outside world, but as an instrument of collaboration when action by single nations would be insufficient to guarantee the National Interest (Parlato 2002). Thus, the 2002 Congress expressed its view of the ideal EU as

an institution that, preserving the specificities of individual States as an element of richness in the Union, can synergistically unite their contributions, not annulling the national States but constituting a confederation of nation-States; in this sense the States and national interests contribute and are not an obstacle to the formation of the European interest and priorities. (AN 2002)

As for the MSI, the confederal form of an ideal EU was thus confirmed as the most

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<sup>30</sup> As mentioned in the above quotation of *Intervista sull'Europa*, it is worth noting that, at least in the 1970s, the MSI was not overly enthused by de Gaulle's vision, which Romualdi defined as positively grand but chauvinistic (1979: 52).

appropriate one, as it would allow the states to form of a European interest respectful of national traditions and interests. Other documents stressed that it should also seek to be closer to the citizens and to the peoples of Europe (Parlato 2002, AN 2004), an innovation which brought the party more in line with the EU itself. Importantly, and, as we shall see in stark opposition to the FN, this confederal Europe remained a variation of the EU that kept intact its key structures, rather than an entirely new project based on radically different forms of collaboration.

### *EUROPE DES PATRIES, EUROPE DES NATIONS, EUROPE A LA CARTE...: THE FN'S PROJECT OF LOOSE CONFEDERAL COLLABORATION*

The concepts of Identity, Liberty, Threat and National Interest all feature prominently in the FN's view of what an ideal Europe would look like. The party, in fact, viewed European unity as guided by the principle of identity among Europeans, in a form that would respect their individual sovereignty, and aimed at their collective defence and the pursuit of mutually beneficial projects where nations alone would not be able to act. The formula the party used to define this form of collaboration was the Gaullist 'Europe of the Homelands'; however, what they meant by it shifted over time, going from a confederal model of integration with a shared defence to an ever looser association of European states. Thus, while using the same formula as AN, the FN pushed for a much weaker form of integration which also placed itself outside the regular frameworks of the EU.

To illustrate how the concepts studied so far figured in the FN's definition of their ideal of European integration and how its positions evolved, it is pertinent to compare three documents spanning a 20 year period. The first one is an excerpt from the 1991 party guide *'Militer au Front'*. The second is an article by Carl Lang in *Français d'Abord*. The third is an excerpt from the party's 2012 electoral programme.

#### **The Europe of Homelands**

Our conception of Europe is that of a Europe of the nations; that is, the organisation of a community of civilisation founded on the renewal of European nations, each preserving its identity and integrity within a confederal entity.

Europe will be based on a political, and not economic, project. [...] The common denominator must be specific to

European countries; therefore, it must be founded on European identity and civilisation. [...]

### **A confederal Europe**

Europe must organise itself, with due respect to proportions, according to the Swiss model, a confederal state, eminently respectful of each particularity [...] From this point of view, Europe or the European Union should adopt the principle of subsidiarity [...]

Europe must do what states cannot do themselves: find the means for a shared defence, develop great projects such as Ariane, Hermes or Airbus.

### **A European Europe**

Europe will be made with Europeans and not with Africans or Asians. Everything must be put in place to preserve the endangered European peoples' identity from the Third World immigration. [...] (FN 1991: 118-119)

**The only Europe worth building is that in which free cooperation between fully independent and totally sovereign nations reinforces each one of them.** This cooperation can only be carried out at the intergovernmental level [...].

In our Europe, the States would be able to pick freely the domains in which they wish to act together. [...]

Our Europe has a vocation to welcome all European countries, but only European countries. [...]

The freedoms, independence, sovereignty and permanence of our different nations and their millenary culture depend on our ability to refuse the Europe that is being built in deception and secrets in Brussels, to put in place a true Europe, that of the Nations, of the Homelands and of the Peoples. (Lang 2000)

In the framework of Article 50 of the Treaty of the European Union, it is appropriate to start a renegotiation of the treaties to break with a failing European construction. [...]

At the end of this process, it will be necessary

- For France to regain control of its borders, preferably in the context of a free association of

European States sharing the same vision and the same interests on subjects such as immigration or the rules regulating foreign exchanges and the movement of capital

- For France to re-establish the primacy of national law over European law
- For France to regain the control of its currency and economic policy
- For the period of great innovative European projects to come, at the service of the peoples, built by starting from voluntary partnerships [...]

We will thus return to its rightful place the useful European cooperation: in projects, cooperation, but removing the tutelage of a Eurocratic Super-State [...]. (FN 2012a)

The passages present three variations on the theme of a ‘Europe of the Homelands’, going from a slightly more ambitious confederal and political project to a looser form of multilateral cooperation at best.

The first passage from *‘Militer au Front’* is, compared with the others, a relatively ambitious one. The model proposed for Europe is a confederal one similar to that of the Swiss and built around the idea of a shared and exclusionary identity. The ‘Europe of the Homelands’ thus constituted would be a ‘political Europe’ based on a common civilisation rather than a mere economic project and aimed primarily at protecting Europe from threats such as decline. While the powers of this Europe should not be overstated, as the use of the concept of subsidiarity implies that they would only apply in cases when the member states cannot act alone, it still points towards a rather structured form of collaboration.

The second and third passage, on the other hand, appear to support more *ad hoc* forms of collaboration, and focus more on Liberty and the National Interest than they do on Identity and Threats (although these still appear). They do so by emphasising the notion of sovereignty and strictly delimiting EU action to areas where individual nations cannot act alone. They also contrast more clearly their view of the ideal form of Europe as one of ‘voluntary partnerships’ with that of the EU as a forced form of collaboration, and the third passage goes as far as claiming the need to leave the European Union. In this sense, they explicitly reject the EU as a framework for collaboration, pointing towards its ultimate unreformability.

## CONSISTENTLY                      NATIONALIST:                      RENEWING COMMITMENT THROUGH EUROPE

The sections so far have shown how the studied parties positioned themselves on the principle, practice and future of European integration. In discussing their positions, the chapter has sought to tease out how the concepts of far right ideology studied in the previous chapters came together in the parties' positions on the EU, and how they were complemented by a fourth concept which could be seen as relevant to nationalism, namely, the National Interest. It thus confirmed the proposition advanced in Chapter two and developed in Chapters three to five that far right parties will draw on key concepts in their ideology not only to define Europe, but also to determine their positions on the European Union.

Why does it matter that the MSI/AN and FN redeployed core concepts in their ideology such as Identity, Liberty and Threat, or that they brought their positions on the EU back to the nation via the concept of the National Interest? The argument advanced here is that drawing on key concepts in their ideology to define Europe and their positions on the EU serves to renew the parties' commitment to long-held principles. To develop this argument, it is important to understand what else parties are doing when they say something about Europe.

First of all, it may be noted that when far right parties draw on familiar concepts in their ideology to integrate new (peripheral) issues, they are not only saying something about the new issue, but they are also restating the importance of the 'old' principles. When the MSI/AN or the FN speak about Europe, they are not simply making claims about Europe: they are saying something about themselves as well. When drawing on Identity, Liberty, the National Interest, or when presenting something as endangered by a Threat, the parties stress what matters to them, the principles that guide them in the political world. As a result, they commit themselves anew to their ideological core, creating an allure of consistency.

The existence of a link between the core and the periphery and the maintenance of that link over time further reinforces the sense of consistency by showing that the same principles keep applying over time and across issues. When the studied parties make Europe a part of their ideology and justify their positions by referring to key concepts, they do not simply stress their commitment to certain principles, they also show more

clearly how they play out in different contexts. They create a narrative about how what matters to them matters everywhere, and not simply in selected areas. In short, they highlight a sense of continuity in their ideology.

Importantly, being able to discuss issues by referring to core principles may help facilitate changes in position by the parties because it can stress continuity even when there appears to be a break. In fact, it may help them highlight consistency even in the face of radical change because it makes it possible to stress that while the position on an issue may have changed, the party remains faithful to certain broader commitments. The FN's U-turn on European integration, represented in the two quotes below, can provide a good illustration of this argument:

I believe that we have a shared heritage in Europe which goes beyond agricultural, coal, steel or atom exchanges. I believe that Europe has a much greater future and a much greater content than this [...]

Finally, Europe can only be built in the fight for its liberty, even more than that, for its liberation. We will never accept the amputation and slavery of the sister nations captured by communism [...]

For there to be a Europe, there needs to be a European sentiment, and that is why we have wanted to transcend patriotism, our national patriotisms, in a European patriotism. That means that there will be no Europe unless it is likely to become a Nation. Now, this nation cannot be created if not to defend itself (and God knows that Europe is menaced) from foreign dangers. [...]

My European programme is in fact the exact extrapolation of the national programme of the FN, since the same dangers that menace France, menace Europe. [...]

The fight for Europe is a fight for France, and the fight for France is a fight for Europe. Build Europe, yes! But by reconstructing France first. Help Europeans, yes! But by helping the French first! (Le Pen 1984: 162-165)

The European Union, created at the beginning between countries sharing similar civilisations, with comparable levels of economic and social development, founded on the principle of 'Community preference', is today diverted from its aims. The results are well known: opening of borders leading to offshoring, unemployment,



the dictatorship of the markets, destruction of public services, precariousness, poverty, massive immigration. Installation of a Super-State, with its Constitution, its indefinite borders where one would like to allow Turkey to become a member, its ultra-liberal and globalist ideology, its ecstasy of new competences. (FN 2012a)

The two passages reproduced here illustrate the positions held by the same party at a distance of roughly thirty years. In the first one, extracted from a chapter of Jean-Marie Le Pen's 1984 programmatic book, tellingly titled 'A strong homeland in a strong Europe', Le Pen discusses his (mostly) favourable view of European integration. The second passage tops the Europe sections of the FN's 2012 electoral programme, where, in its original form, it is duly followed by a discussion of the EU's democratic deficit, its role as a body that was built 'without the people' and working 'against the people' and the ways in which it harms France; it also ends with the call to leave the EU and 'lay the foundations for a Europe that will respect popular sovereignties, national identities, languages and cultures, and that will truly be at the service of the peoples through concrete actions'.

What is interesting about these passages is that while the party changed position on the EU, the core concepts it relied upon remained the same, albeit interpreted differently at times. In the first passage, Identity appears through ideas of a shared heritage and European patriotism; in the second, it is something that the EU has ceased to respect in abandoning the idea of 'Community preference' and clear borders. In the first passage, there is a call for the Liberty of Europe; in the second, it is claimed that the EU is some 'Super-State' which always seeks new powers and violates sovereignty. In both cases there is a Threat lurking in the background: in the first passage, it is not named; in the second, it is the EU itself. Finally, the first passage advances the idea that what is good for Europe is good for France, and hence may be viewed as serving the National Interest; while, in parts of the second passage not reproduced here, the EU is presented as something that actively harms it. Overall, then, while the policy changed, the presence of similar guiding principles ensured continuity between past and present, reinforcing the notion of the party as a 'community of principle' (White and Ypi 2016: 14).

In the case of AN, maintaining the use of similar concepts in its positions on Europe may also have fostered a sense of continuity with the past in times of change for the party. Defining Europe in broadly similar terms to those adopted by the MSI may, in

particular, may have provided a sense that even in times of change certain principles remained unaltered. Thus, its continued references to a ‘powerful’ Europe, and its attachment to a European civilisation and to an EU dedicated to defending the National Interest ensured conceptual continuity between the MSI and its successor party, even as other concepts such as Threat disappeared.

In summary, the parties’ use of core concepts in their ideology to integrate a new issue such as Europe allows them to stress consistency and attachment to certain fixed principles because it restates the concepts’ value and shows how they apply over time and across issues. Appealing to them also makes policy change easier to justify, in so far as change can be still presented as part of a coherent story.

While the fact that the parties draw on concepts in their ideology to integrate new issues may be viewed, as is the case in this thesis, as a reflection of the importance of ideas in informing action (see, among others, Bevir 2006: 284, Kitschelt 1994: 256, Hay 2002: 213, Yanow and Schwartz Shea 2006: 109) or, in a less demanding fashion, as a manifestation of ‘bounded rationality’ where ideology works as a constraint on the positions that are available to parties (Kitschelt et al. 1999: 440, Marks and Wilson 2000), the argument of continuity carries some interest even for scholars who prefer to view parties as strategic actors. In particular, it may encourage a reflection on consistency as a political strategy which could help parties in elections because it projects the image of them as actors that stand by their word (whether they believe in what they say or not is beside the point here).

A final point of reflection concerning the specific concept of the National Interest is required before closing this chapter. While this section has discussed why the National Interest, along with the other concepts, serves to create an image of consistency in the studied parties, its value in itself has not been discussed. Two brief points may be noted: first of all, as claimed earlier, it underlines the importance of the nation in far right thinking which, along with the other concepts, allows them to stress commitment to a core principle; second, it may be argued that, very much like Liberty, it allows the parties to draw on a discourse that, while consistent with what they believe, is also prevalent in other political actors.

## CONCLUSION

Following three chapters dedicated to the parties' understanding of Europe, this chapter explored how the way in which they defined Europe informed their positions on the European Union. In particular, it showed how the concepts studied so far, along with the additional concept of National Interest, helped define the parties' positions on the principle, practice and future of European integration. This, the chapter argued, was consistent with the idea that parties would draw on core concepts in their ideology not only to define Europe, but also to present their 'programme for action'. The parties' positions are summarised in the table below.

TABLE 5: SUMMATIVE TABLE OF THE PROGRAMME FOR ACTION

Main theme	Subthemes	Present in		
		MSI	AN	FN
<b>The programme for action</b>	<b>Principle of European Collaboration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shared favourable view of European collaboration</li> <li>Different aims identified</li> </ul>	Aims of European unity: protect from threats, restore European power	Aims of European unity: collective action and pursuit of national interest	Aims of European unity: defence from outside world, restore power (1980s), collective action and pursuit of national interest (1990 on)
	<b>Practice of EU integration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shared critical assessment of the EU</li> <li>Reasons and level of opposition vary</li> </ul>	Moderately negative assessment of EU as excessively focused on economics	Mixed assessment of the EU as unable to fulfil expectations	Highly negative assessment of the EU as a threat
	<b>Future of Europe</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agreement on a confederal form</li> <li>Different types of integration sought</li> </ul>	'Nation Europe': integrated economically, politically and militarily	'Europe of the Homelands': acting where nation-states cannot act alone	'Europe of the Homelands': politically and militarily integrated (1980s), loose ad hoc collaborations (1990s onwards)

The concluding part of the chapter focused on why it matters that the parties drew on core concepts to integrate new issues in their ideology. In particular, it was suggested that this allowed them to present themselves as consistent actors committed to certain principles. It was also briefly suggested that the reliance on the concept of National Interest performed a similar role to the reliance on the notion of Liberty: that is, presenting parties as aligned with other actors in the political system. The next chapter concludes the thesis by bringing together the insights advanced so far on the far right's ideology of Europe and discussing how they contribute to existing literature.

## 7. CONCLUSION

### SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS AND CONTRIBUTION

This thesis opened with a series of statements that illustrated the complexity of the far right's thinking on Europe. Its main objective has been to delve deeper into this complexity, revealing how far right parties viewed Europe through ideological lenses. Employing a combination of morphological and discourse analysis, and focusing on the Movimento Sociale Italiano/Alleanza Nazionale in Italy and the Front National in France, the thesis addressed two research questions. First, how have far right parties viewed Europe through ideological lenses and how have they incorporated the concept of Europe into their system of beliefs? Second, how has their ideology informed their positions on the European Union? It advanced the expectation that far right parties would draw on existing concepts within their ideology to make sense of Europe and develop positions on the European Union.

The key contention advanced in the thesis is that the MSI/AN and FN repurposed key concepts in their ideology in order to integrate 'Europe' into it, thereby creating a distinctively far right conception of Europe. Drawing on the analysis of party documents produced by the MSI/AN and FN between 1978 and 2017, the empirical sections of this work showed how the parties redeployed key concepts in their ideology to make Europe and the EU a part of their worldview. They demonstrated how the studied parties built a far right conception of Europe and developed their positions on European integration by drawing on the concepts of Identity, Liberty, Threat and National Interest. Identity served to define Europe as a clearly bound civilizational space that the parties professed an attachment to. Liberty was used to define Europe as a territory that needed to reclaim its autonomy and power, but also, in the case of the Front National, to oppose the constraints that the European Union placed on self-rule. The concept of Threat further characterised Europe as an endangered space. These concepts, in conjunction with the notion of National Interest, also came into play in defining how the MSI/AN and FN determined their positions on European integration. Through the use of a diachronic approach, the analysis also highlighted that the parties remained consistent in their use of these concepts, drawing on a similar set of ideas throughout the period of study.

Before illustrating how this thesis contributes to existing research, it is important to dispel one last doubt that may have arisen concerning how distinctively far right this conception of Europe is. A sceptical reader might suggest, for example, that there are too many similarities between the far right and the mainstream for this to be a ‘distinctively’ far right conception of Europe. They could cite the similarities between the studied parties’ views on Europe and those of more reputable characters such as Charles de Gaulle. They could also argue that the ‘politics of emergency’ are now part of the mainstream, evidenced by leaders’ responses to the migration crisis or to the Eurozone crisis. Finally, they might suggest that certain topics that usually occupy a central place in the definition of the far right barely make an appearance. For example, they might ask why Islam or immigration has not been given a more prominent place in the analysis.

On the limited space given to certain topics, it should be remembered that the primary aim of this thesis was to understand what the parties mentioned in conjunction with Europe. In this sense, issues that occupy a more central place in their ideology may have been given less prominence because they were less relevant to the parties’ definition of Europe or discussions of the EU. This does not mean that they are irrelevant to them, but simply that in their discussions of Europe they have tended to focus on a different set of issues. On the question of distinctiveness, it is pertinent to reiterate the point raised in Chapter five that, while the concepts themselves may not be ‘distinctively’ far right, the way in which they are defined and their overall combination is. In this, sense, the parties’ conception of Europe is not distinctively far right because it revolves around the concept of Identity or Liberty, but because it revolves around both of those, plus the concept of National Interest and that of Threat. To this point, one might also want to add that there is a question of systematicity to be considered. In particular, what makes these concepts more distinctive of the far right than of other party families is the systematic and continuous way in which they are employed: while others may occasionally appeal to emergency politics, they will rarely do it over an extended period of time and apply that frame to every issue they discuss. In this sense, while there is overlap between what the studied parties have had to say and the mainstream, this should not lead to a rejection of the idea that this conception of Europe as a whole is distinctive of the far right.

The thesis’s key findings offer some helpful additions to existing works on the far right in Europe. In particular, they provide an account on how ideology mattered in the far right’s definition of Europe and nuance (mainly vernacular) views of far right

parties as somewhat inconsistent populists, at least as far as their positions on Europe are concerned.

The argument that the MSI/AN and FN drew on existing elements in their ideology to define Europe and their positions on the EU contributes to existing literature on far right Euroscepticism and expands its scope by examining the parties' respective conceptions of Europe more broadly rather than focusing only on their perspectives on the EU and its policies. In particular, by showing how the MSI/AN and FN redeployed core concepts of far right ideology to define both Europe and their positions on European integration, the thesis lends credence to the claim that ideology shapes party positions on Europe (e.g. Gómez-Reino 2018, Hooghe et al. 2002, Halikiopoulou et al. 2012). What this thesis adds is an account of how ideology mattered. Unlike previous works, which often provided limited cues concerning the path from a certain set of beliefs to a certain position on Europe, this thesis adopted a conceptual approach, advancing a series of expectations concerning how a new issue such as Europe could become part of far right ideology. It then developed this account with empirical evidence by illustrating which elements of far right ideology came into play in the MSI/AN and FN's definition of Europe and their respective positioning on European integration.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the thesis highlighted that the MSI/AN and FN's nationalism was the key element in explaining their understanding of Europe and their positions on European integration; however, it also showed that its relationship with opposition to European integration was less linear than often assumed. Nationalism, which was here understood to be both about constructing identities and about expressing them in the political realm, clearly had a central place in providing the conceptual background against which the parties defined Europe and their positions on European integration. The fact that it came into play both in positive and negative evaluations of Europe nevertheless suggests the need to be wary of equating far right nationalism with opposition to Europe writ large. Opposition to European integration was not a necessary consequence of the MSI/AN and FN's ideology, but merely a plausible one which in the case of the FN materialised as the result of the interactions between ideological predispositions and contextual factors, such as the historical context during the period in which the party was developing its stance on Europe and the evolutions in the European Union itself. Thus, while ideology mattered, it bears repeating that ideologies do not operate in a vacuum, but are partially shaped by their surroundings.

This observation of ideological flexibility makes another point in the MSI/AN and FN's ideology perhaps even more striking: namely, their strong consistency at the level of concepts. While the parties showed some flexibility in terms of their understanding of and positioning on Europe, a remarkable observation provided by the combination of a *longue durée* approach and morphological analysis is that they did this within clearly delimited conceptual boundaries. Their understanding of Europe drew consistently on similar ideas, and even when they shifted positions on European integration, they relied on the same concepts to discuss their positions. Thus, while the concepts' relationship with Europe changed, they remained consistent at the level of principles, suggesting that ideological flexibility is not absolute, but instead confined within a certain set of boundaries. While it is not impossible for parties to abandon such boundaries, doing so might come at a high cost in terms of credibility.

In the context of parties often considered to be 'populists'—with populism taken to mean, especially in casual usage, that these actors will stand for anything that gets them into office (Bale et al. 2011, Stanley 2008: 101, Urbinati 2019: 112)—the observation of ideological consistency implies the need to adjust such perceptions. At the very least, the finding suggests that one should accept that even if 'populists' might be able to stand for anything, they could still find it helpful to present their most audacious positions as consistent with what they claim to believe in the first place. This observation may also be relevant to scholars sceptical of the idea that parties are motivated by ideology because it suggests that even entirely strategic actors may find it advantageous to present their positions in the context of a certain tradition, so as to convey an image of themselves as principled actors.

Another implication of the centrality of nationalism to the MSI/AN and FN's definition of Europe is that other elements that are sometimes cited as explaining far right views of European integration were likely less important to them. This is the case of populism in particular, a frequently cited core ideological trait of parties such as the FN (albeit not of the MSI/AN), and usually considered as explaining part of their opposition to European integration (Pirro and Van Kessel 2017: 407). The findings of this thesis, however, suggest that populism is a secondary driver of far right Euroscepticism in comparison to nationalism. First, core aspects of populism such as the vertical distinction between 'the people' and the 'elite' (de Cleen 2017: 346) did not serve to define Europe; rather, it was the nationalist concept of Identity as a horizontal separation between the

‘in-group’ and the ‘out-group’ (Halikiopoulou and Vlandas 2019) that the parties employed to do this. Second, once it is acknowledged that nationalism is not only about constructing national identities but also about expressing them in the political realm (and hence, fundamentally about Liberty), populism becomes a largely redundant concept. This is because some of the discursive elements that are often labelled ‘populist’ in the case of the far right could be credibly viewed as an expression of this political aspect of nationalism. In the case of the FN in particular, ‘the people’ who needed to be defended against an evil (and inherently cosmopolitan) elite were always the national ‘in-group’, and it was the national people’s sovereignty and their General Will that needed to be expressed. Thus, the concept of populism has little analytical purchase in explaining their positions on European integration (for a similar point, but applied to far right ideology more generally, see also Halikiopoulou and Vlandas 2019, Eatwell 2000: 412-413). The far right’s concept of popular sovereignty is always synonymous with national sovereignty, making nationalism, not populism, the core of their understanding and positioning on Europe.

Taken together, these findings challenge the typical equation ‘far right = Eurosceptic’. First, ‘Eurosceptic’ as a term only applies to the extent that ‘euro’ stands for ‘EU’. In consonance with Vasilopoulou’s argument (2018a: 20-24) that far right parties are broadly in favour of a cultural definition of Europe even if many of them oppose the EU, the thesis has shown that the MSI/AN and FN displayed a certain attachment to Europe; however, especially in the case of the FN, they deeply disliked the EU as a political embodiment of it. Second, the observation of the parties’ changes over time suggest that far right parties are not natural-born Eurosceptics because of their nationalism. As Flood (2002: 7-11; see also Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b: 257) pertinently noted, ideology is flexible and Europe is complex, and there is no party family that is naturally bound to oppose European integration. Far right parties are no exception. As this thesis has shown, the MSI did not reject the process of European integration while the FN only came to oppose it in the latter years of its history. While there were certainly good reasons to expect that the parties’ ideology could lead them to oppose European integration, this was not inevitable, but instead the result of a combination of factors shifting their positions in that direction. This observation serves as a reminder of why it is important to ‘take ideology seriously’ in studies of Euroscepticism (Flood and Soborski



2018: 38). The links between positions on the EU and ideology are complex and need to be studied in depth to be fully understood.

The observation that the conflation of far right with Eurosceptic is misguided is not only a point of scholarly interest, but is also relevant to making sense of some recent political phenomena that have been viewed by many with bewilderment, such as the growth of transnational alliances between far right parties. While the presence of transnational links between far right parties is nothing new (e.g. Albanese and Del Hierro 2016, Mammone 2015, Zúquete 2015), these were widely publicised in the news media prior to the 2019 European Parliament elections and have often been regarded as somewhat paradoxical attempts to construct a nationalist international (e.g., Charlemagne 2019). Noting that far right parties can oppose the EU but still claim an attachment to Europe helps explain why, in spite of their nationalism, they have been able to collaborate across borders. Not unlike the FN and MSI in the 1980s (but now replacing the USSR with the new threat of 'Brussels'), these parties have been able to justify their transnational activities as part of a project to defend Europe from the EU. They have also been able to collaborate because they found cooperation beneficial: namely, it served to portray them as a unified and growing movement, carrying ever greater political weight and forming the main axis of opposition to the cosmopolitan elites.

Crucially, however, one should not assume that a far-right takeover or destruction of the EU institutions is in the making or ever likely to happen. As the thesis has noted, while far right parties do benefit from some ideological flexibility, the nation and the national interest remain their guiding principles. Although they may be invoked in the service of a higher European interest, this strategy will only be effective so long as there is some convergence between the European and the national interest, and where no fundamental trade-offs are required between the two. Thus, while the far right may be able to argue that they are both nationalists and Europeans in the current political context, in case of conflict, it is unlikely that their commitment to Europe will ever trump the nation. In the improbable event that far right parties did engineer a takeover of the institutions, it is also doubtful that they would actively seek to dismantle them. Europe, after all, has its uses, and it is likely that they will be willing to take advantage of some of them. More likely, the far right would try to transform the EU into something more compatible with their own worldview; however, what this 'Europe of the Nations' would look like, or how it would function, remains mostly unclear.

What is more problematic for the EU in the short term is that much of the far right's criticism contests core assumptions about the EU institutions, and runs counter some of the solutions brought forward to tackle its own legitimacy deficit. For example, the centrality of the concept of Identity to the parties' definition of Europe raises questions about the feasibility of promoting a 'European identity' as a solution to the EU's legitimacy issues. In fact, while both the MSI and the FN defined themselves as belonging to Europe, for the FN this did not seem to involve supporting the EU, but rather, became a reason to oppose it in the name of a different, truer Europe. In this sense, European identity may not be a solution to the EU's woes, but rather, an additional challenge. This points towards another factor worth noting: namely, the contestedness of the concept of Europe. What this thesis has shown, especially through its analysis of the Front National, is that for all of the EU's attempts to monopolise the meaning of Europe (Glencross 2019: 2), Europe and the EU remain separate concepts, making it possible for parties to pit one against the other. This creates a counter-narrative of Europe which questions the very premise that the EU is the embodiment of Europe. Reopening that equation to contestation removes one of its legitimising narratives, suggesting that the way ahead for the EU will remain paved with opposition. Thus, even if far right parties may not be able to coalesce to dismantle the EU or orchestrate a takeover of its institutions from the inside, they can still lead public opinion against it and hinder further institution-building.

While this thesis' main contribution is to the literature focusing on the far right's understanding of Europe and their position on the EU, some of its observations can also contribute to the literature on the Europeanisation of the far right, far right ideology, and the relationship between the far right and the political mainstream.

On the first point, in addition to examining how Europe became a part of the MSI/AN and FN's ideology, the empirical chapters also showed how the integration of Europe modified the parties' ideology. They demonstrated how defining Europe or 'European' as a form of Identity opened up their ideology, and how employing the concept of Liberty shifted attention away from the more contentious aspects of their ideology to the less controversial ones. They also illustrated how presenting Europe as an endangered realm helped the parties portray themselves as 'prophetic' actors, and how the fact that they relied on existing concepts in their ideology to define their positions on the EU conveyed an image of them as committed actors. Thus, they showed how taking

part in the process of European integration shaped and altered the parties' ideology as a whole, and how it allowed them to convey certain messages about themselves.

An element which this thesis has not considered, but which may be relevant for future research, is how the integration of Europe into the parties' ideology may have benefitted them. In fact, while literature on the 'Europeanisation' of the far right has done the important job of understanding how participation in European institutions has given far right parties practical and symbolic resources for their legitimisation, it has not extended this line of reasoning to what the parties have said about Europe. This point has not been addressed by the existing literature which, in focusing on the legitimising effects of party practices in Europe, has neglected the potential effects of party beliefs about Europe (for an exception, see Adamson and Johns 2008). As a result, we do not know if the parties' position on Europe, and how they have presented them, has also been an advantage for them, or if it has been a hindrance.

While this question cannot be answered here, it is possible to tentatively suggest that Europe may have functioned as an ideological resource, allowing the parties to project a more respectable image. There are several ways it may have done so. The MSI/AN and FN's appeal to a European civilisation may have moderated their image of being dangerous 'closed' nationalists, by suggesting that they are open to other (European) peoples and cultures. In a similar fashion, the FN's appeal to Europe in opposition to the EU may have helped them claim legitimacy by suggesting that they represent a 'true Europe' as opposed to a distorted version of it. Their increased focus on concepts and ideas shared by the mainstream, such as Liberty and National Interest, may have helped the parties present themselves as actors holding 'normal' positions, rather than as actors belonging outside the mainstream of politics. Alternately, relying on the 'politics of emergency' (e.g., White 2015, 2019) and presenting Europe as endangered may have helped the MSI/AN and FN construct legitimacy by promoting the idea that, in desperate situations, positions normally judged as extreme can become a serious possibility. Finally, the MSI/AN and FN's tendency to draw on old concepts in their ideology to define their positions on the EU, thereby renewing their commitment to long-held principles, may have helped them present themselves as credible and trustworthy actors who would keep their word if entrusted with power. In sum, integrating Europe into their ideology may have provided them with the resources to draw attention to the less divisive aspects of their ideology, thus contributing to their legitimisation as political

actors. Future research may explore these mechanisms further and understand to what extent Europe has been an ideological resource for the far right.

Suggesting that Europe may have acted as an ideological resource for the legitimization of the MSI/AN and FN does raise a further question concerning whether parties intentionally used it as such, or whether this was an unintended side effect of its integration. More broadly, it asks us to consider whether the parties used Europe to deliberately reorient their ideology (for example, to stress their ‘openness’ or similarity with other actors), or if integrating Europe happened to change it in unexpected ways. The answer to this question is likely to be a bit of both. Ideologies may experience both deliberate and unintended changes, and have both deliberate and unintended consequences, meaning that the parties may have sought out some of them and stumbled upon others. At least for the Front National, however, there are good reasons to think that their position on Europe was meant to serve the broader goal of legitimization. In fact, the FN’s political strategy has been heavily influenced by intellectuals of the *Nouvelle Droite* who insisted on the importance of using language to shape perceptions of what is acceptable (Camus 2015: 108-110). In this sense, they are more likely to have deliberately presented their positions in a way that fostered legitimacy and the creation of a more positive political image. Overall, however, both the intended and unintended consequences of ideology are worthy of study because they both shape how parties are viewed.

Concerning far right ideology more generally, by showing which of their core concepts the MSI/AN and FN redeployed in their definition of Europe, the thesis has given an idea, however partial, of what elements recur in the parties’ ideology. In this case, what appeared absolutely central to the parties’ identity was their nationalism, much more than their authoritarianism, or in the case of the FN, their populism. This further confirms the pivotal role of the nation in far right ideology, suggesting that it is indeed the central concept around which the rest of the ideology revolves.

Chapter six also highlighted an important difference between the far right MSI and FN and the ‘post-fascist’ Alleanza Nazionale: namely, the absence of a sense of urgency in the ideology of the latter. While this would certainly require further research, it can be tentatively suggested that one important difference between the far right and the mainstream right consists precisely in their recourse to a politics of emergency, or, at least, in its centrality in their ideology. In particular, while both the mainstream right and

the far right may refer to notions of urgency and emergency, the latter will tend to do it systematically and continuously, while the former may delimit its usage to certain periods of time.

One final point that the thesis highlighted in terms of far right ideology is the similarity between some of the things that far right parties wrote in their documents and existing mainstream political ideas at the time. Reflecting on the implications of this observation, two things may be said. The first one, consistent with Mudde (2010), is that this observation encourages scholars to think about far right parties as ‘pathological normalcies’ rather than normal pathologies, and not only in terms of the positions that they express on issues such as immigration. This is perhaps an unpleasant observation, but one that critics of the far right will need to be aware of if they are to construct effective counterstrategies. It is not enough to call out parties as extreme, or radical; one also needs to understand why certain ideas resonate. This may have little or nothing to do with the parties themselves and require engagement with what else about society at large makes it possible for them to be successful.

The second observation about the similarities between far right discourse and many mainstream political ideas is that it problematises the definition of ‘mainstreaming’ as a process whereby far right parties converge towards the centre and adopt positions closer to those of mainstream political parties (Akkerman et al. 2016: 7). On the one hand, one may wish to question the extent to which far right parties are in need of ‘mainstreaming’, or if, indeed, their ideas are already largely present in the mainstream. On the other, it may be argued that their focus on shared ideas noted in Chapter four and Chapter seven suggests that they are indeed attempting to ‘mainstream’, but with the term taken to mean something beyond ‘looking like other political parties’. What might be suggested is that there are other ways for parties to ‘mainstream’ that do not entail adopting positions similar to those of less radical parties but simply entail stressing ideas they hold that are broadly acceptable, natural or at least understandable in democratic societies. This is what the parties do when they focus on the ideas of Liberty or National Interest: they are not necessarily converging towards the centre in their policies, but rather, using ideological elements that are broadly acceptable to justify their extreme policies. In this sense, mainstreaming may not only refer to a process of converging towards the message of mainstream parties, but also, to the exploitation of shared ideas and values to justify extreme positions.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Where can future research go from here? Three paths appear most interesting: the first entails consolidating the findings of this thesis; the second calls for an expansion of its scope to other political parties; the final one shifts the focus to the meanings taken by ‘essentially contested concepts’ in use.

A first avenue for future research addresses one of the limitations of this study: namely, its small number of cases. While the choice to focus on a small number of case studies was justified by the objective of privileging depth over breadth, it does mean that they cannot be used to make a case about far right parties in general. One way in which this could be addressed in future research is by carrying out a similar study on different parties belonging to the far right party family and understanding whether they present similar results. There are good reasons to think that this would be the case. As mentioned in the analysis, the concepts used by the MSI/AN and FN did appear to fall in line with existing literature on what could be expected from far right ideology and with what far right parties have been saying in other countries (e.g. Adamson and Johns 2008, Brubaker 2017, Fieschi et al. 1996), suggesting they may have broader applicability. However, whether all European far right parties draw on pre-existing concepts to integrate Europe in their ideology would warrant further investigation. This could be done both qualitatively, following the procedure adopted in this thesis, or quantitatively, employing text analysis software to facilitate the procedure. A helpful addition to this work is also the previously mentioned research of how integrating Europe into far right ideology in a certain way may have benefitted parties, and whether it was effective.

A second way forward for future research is to analyse the ideology of Europe of a broader group of parties. While some work has focused on the role of parties in the EU (Hix and Lord 1997, Lindberg et al 2010), how left/right poisoning influences positions on EU integration (Aspinwall 2002, Hooghe et al. 2002), how Socialist parties positioned themselves vis-a-vis European integration (Featherstone 1988) or how Christian Democratic parties have sought to shape the European construction (Kaiser 2007), we still know little about how specific ideological traditions approach Europe. To this day, and to the best of the author’s knowledge, Gaffney’s 1996 edited volume is the only one which attempts to bring together accounts of party positions on Europe, although it suffers from a focus on national parties and a limited selection of comparative approaches. The question, however, is not devoid of interest. The European Union, in fact, is a construction

that can be very difficult to handle for parties because there is no straightforward ‘ideological’ way to define their positions on it (Flood 2002: 7-11, Gaffney 1996: 19). This point is evident in the analysis conducted through this thesis, and applies even to parties that might have been expected to ‘naturally’ oppose European integration.

Building on the methodological approach used in this project, future research could study key texts on Europe produced by intellectuals, politicians, and groups belonging to the main European party families (Conservatives, Christian Democrats, Liberals, Social Democrats, Greens, Radical Right parties and Radical Left parties), individuating the core concepts they relied upon to define it and analysing their evolving positions on the issue of European integration. This would entail understanding the tensions that European integration generated for parties, but also, how the European Union itself has been thought of as an ‘ideologically charged’ construction, for example by those who have viewed it as an inherently open ‘neo-liberal’ and ‘cosmopolitan’ institution, or by those who viewed it as a closed and delimited ‘Fortress Europe’. It would also entail understanding the effects of the integration of Europe into party ideology and its potential as an ideological resource: what changes did it entail, and how did it help (or hinder) parties’ ideological and electoral development? Considering the role that political parties play in the EU, and most importantly, the ideological divisions that have arisen within them concerning European integration, this appears to be rather promising area for future research.

The final promising avenue for future research springs less from this thesis’s limitations than from the phenomenon at its core: the meaning of concepts in use. This project has been dedicated to understanding the meaning of the single concept of Europe in far right ideology. In doing so, it has introduced other concepts such as Identity, Liberty, Threat and National Interest, and focused on their meaning to far right parties. What the analysis has shown is that the MSI/AN and the FN interpreted these themes in distinctive ways, playing with the ‘essentially contested’ (Gallie 1955) nature of some of them. They have appropriated these concepts and made them their own, adopting definitions that ‘made sense’ in their worldview. Therefore, it is worth exploring more in depth what these parties, and other political actors, mean when they use certain concepts, why certain understandings dominate in their ideologies, and the practical implications of adopting a particular understanding. Rather than opening a new field of research, this project returns to the familiar themes of conceptual history (for a recent overview, see

Wimmer 2015), but with a sharper focus on the ideological roots of the interpretation of certain concepts by different actors.

This is not a merely intellectual exercise, but one that has practical relevance too because the way in which concepts are interpreted can have real-life consequences. One might consider, for instance, the example of sovereignty in the context of the European Union. At the heart of the EU project is the idea that sovereignty is pooled between countries. Each country gives up a measure of its own legal sovereignty in order to gain more ‘real’ sovereignty by leveraging collective power. This entails adopting a certain understanding of sovereignty that allows for it to be divisible, and equates it with ideas of effective power. Far right parties contest this definition of sovereignty and create a counter-narrative about it. In their vision, sovereignty is undivided, absolute and the sole source of legitimate power. This makes the EU an aberration because it limits sovereignty defined in this manner. By doing so, the far right opens the meaning of sovereignty to contestation and can successfully leverage opposition to the EU on such grounds. Neither is the far right the only political group who does this, as the UK’s 2016 referendum on EU membership demonstrated. The Leave campaign effectively proposed a view of sovereignty as a matter of ‘taking back control’ rather than one of political power in a globalised world, and it employed this narrative as a key element of its successful campaign to leave the EU. Future research, then, might look at how these ‘essentially contested concepts’ are employed in the public space: what do they mean to whom, what are the implications of certain understandings, what opportunities do they open and close off, and how do they do it? The pool of available concepts is vast, and has the potential to bridge work in the fields of politics, history, and political theory, making this a fruitful area for cross-pollination.

Given the growing relevance of far right parties, the return of ideological conflict after many years of apparent political convergence towards the centre, and the uncertainty surrounding the future direction of the EU, these issues warrant serious investigation. While this thesis has only scratched the surface of some of these areas of research, it has hopefully provided new conceptual tools to explore them in greater depth and expand research in the fields of far right politics, political ideologies and European studies.



# APPENDIX

## APPENDIX A: CORPUS BUILDING

### DATA COLLECTION

The main sources of this thesis consist of archival documents and various types of party literature. While archival resources represent the main source for the thesis, the researcher also carried out a small number of interviews (n=6) with current and former members of the two parties to gain a better knowledge of their inner workings. These included two former party leaders (FN and MSI/AN), a current MEP (FN) and three former regional councillors (FN). While their contributions are not cited, they provided valuable insights and relevant documentation on the parties of which they were (and in two cases still are) members.

### CREATING THE CORPUS

The first step in the creation of the empirical corpus of this thesis consisted in identifying relevant sources. Data was collected through a mix of online and library research carried out in London, and archival research in Paris, Florence and Rome. The aim of data collection was to build a corpus of documents in which the selected parties discussed 'Europe'. To do so, the researcher first identified a number of general party sources, and then explored them thoroughly to build a corpus of documents which either centred exclusively on or discussed in some depth European issues. To avoid a common issue of 'eurocentrism' in European studies, more general documents such as party programmes and congress motions were also included as to understand the overall place and relevance of Europe. Digital copies were made of relevant documents, so that they could be read and analysed in depth at a later stage.

Building a corpus for the Front National was a relatively straightforward process. The Front National is a party that has been reasonably successful and which has published a large number of documents in its 47 years of continued existence. In addition, it has had its own publishing company (*Éditions Nationales*) which published a number of political books in its years of activity. Most Front National programs were available directly online and accessible via a simple Google search, and those which were not immediately

available could be retrieved from the Comparative Manifesto Project (MARPOR) and the Euromanifesto project database. In addition, the library of the London School of Economics had a number of primary sources available in book format. In this way, all programs published between 1984 and 2017 were found, with the exception of the programme from 1993 which was retrieved at a later stage from Sciences Po Paris.

To complement this mainly electorally-oriented corpus, the researcher identified the need to draw upon additional party literature which would allow to capture the non-electoral and internally directed dynamics of ideology and provide a more comprehensive view of 'Europe' in the FN's discourse. The opportunity to achieve this was offered by a two and a half month research stay in Sciences Po Paris, in which extensive use was made of the university's resources and of the documents available at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Thus, the initial corpus was enriched with articles and editorials from *Le National*, an early party magazine, *La Lettre de Jean-Marie Le Pen*, the official bi-weekly magazine of the party between 1985 and 2008 (from 1995 and until it ceased publication in 2008 also known as *Français d'Abord*), *Nations Presse Magazine*, a monthly publication aimed at supporting Marine Le Pen's campaign for the FN's presidency and her subsequent work as president of the party between 2010 and 2015, and a number of speeches retrieved from the BNF's 'Archives de l'Internet', which gave access to cached versions of the Front National's website. Finally, to cover the period in which no other grey literature was available (2015-2018), the researcher drew on further internet based research, identifying relevant press releases, electoral material and speeches from the Front National's website (<https://rassemblementnational.fr/>).

Building a corpus for the MSI/AN required more digging, but was greatly helped by the fact that many of the archives of the MSI have been recently digitalized, and that for most of its existence, the party had an associated daily newspaper, '*Il Secolo d'Italia*', which made it possible to retrieve a large number of documents.

The starting point for corpus building were the archives of the Fondazione Ugo Spirito - Renzo De Felice. The Fondazione Ugo Spirito - Renzo de Felice (from here on, FUS) was founded in Rome in 1981 following a donation by his wife of documents belonging to the late Ugo Spirito. The foundation has a large archival fund bringing together various MSI documents, ranging from foundational documents, internal communications, congress motions, press reviews etc. The first stage of this thesis's research was thus dedicated to sifting through the fund, identifying relevant documents -

in particular, electoral material, speeches, reports and party congress motions. This could be easily done online, as the archives of the Fondazione have been digitalized and made available on the website of the Italian Senate ([www.archivionline.senato.it](http://www.archivionline.senato.it)). In addition, the researcher spent two days in the offices of the FUS in Rome, exploring funds which had yet to be made available online. From this initial phase, the researcher collected a number of party congress documents, as well as some relevant newspaper articles and reports.

Following this initial phase, the researcher's attention turned to the *Secolo d'Italia*, the party's official newspaper. The *Secolo d'Italia* provided additional resources, in particular editorials and articles discussing the MSI and AN's vision of Europe, party programmes from both parties, and congress documents relating to AN. In fact, with the exception of the 'Fiuggi Theses', no other documents could be found online for AN. Microfilm copies of the *Secolo d'Italia* published between 1979 and 2009 were consulted in the library of the Università Cesare Alfieri in Florence and relevant articles were saved in a digital form. While other forms of grey literature were considered (such as party magazines), there was no magazine comparable in terms of its relevance and continuity to *La Lettre* or even to *National Hebdo*, so the attention was mainly focused on the *Secolo d'Italia*. I also contacted the Fondazione Alleanza Nazionale to request any relevant documentation they may have on AN's positions on Europe and requested the Euromanifestoes of AN from the Euromanifesto study. Finally, a trip to the Biblioteca di Storia Contemporanea in Rome and further research in the LSE Library resulted in the acquisition of three further programmatic books (two interviews with party leaders on Europe and the project of the Eurodestra, and an 'A to Z' of the principles of the MSI).

Overall, around 400 documents of various nature were collected, ranging between 1 and 187 pages (complete list made available to examiners in electronic format). While there are some gaps in years (notably, there were no documents available for the FN in 1996 or between 1982 and 1984), the entirety of the period between 1978 and 2009 for MSI-AN, and 1978-2017 for the FN was covered. Note that this number of documents does not correspond to the entirety of articles published on Europe during the period but only a selection of the ones which upon a first read appeared more conducive to in-depth analysis. In particular, when making a decision on whether to make a copy or not, the author tried to privilege documents of an analytical nature or which expressed partisan positions, rather than merely descriptive ones discussing, for example, a new EU policy

or the outcome of an EU summit. While the corpus is not exhaustive, the large number of documents provides a reasonable expectation that they could be considered representative of the parties' overall positions and discourse.

This initial corpus was read in depth and analysed, with the purpose of identifying common themes and threads across documents and across parties. A number of key documents were then selected for further in-depth analysis and brought together into a smaller sample of documents (26 MSI, 21 AN and 65 FN – full list available below and originals made available to examiners in electronic format). The choice to analyse only one fourth of the documents was driven by both practical and theoretical considerations. Theoretically speaking, the preliminary reading of the documents, as well as previous research on these parties (e.g. Dézé 2008) highlighted the fact that they tended to display high levels of ideological intensity, and often repeated the same points and ideas in different spaces. Thus, it was expected that analysing the whole corpus would not have produced significantly different results and that saturation would likely be reached even with a smaller sample. This was subsequently confirmed with the analysis, where the coding procedure stopped generating new codes before all documents had been analysed. Practically, given that the thesis relied on a form of qualitative analysis, analysing the entire corpus in full as a single researcher would have required conspicuous time investment for little added value.

In order to facilitate storage, the researcher opted to code the purposive sample with NVivo. While NVivo has several functions that can be used to analyse a document, for example running word searches or seeking to identify patterns, in the case of this research it was mostly used as a filing system in which passages were highlighted and sorted into different 'codes'. Documents which were not already in a searchable PDF format had to be either transformed into searchable PDF files through OCR software, or transcribed when OCR processes failed. This was the case for all MSI/AN documents and for a large portion of FN documents. Short documents (two pages or less) were transcribed in full. In the case of longer documents, these were transcribed in full only when the entire document was relevant. In the case of documents where only a part had been dedicated to Europe (for example, in programmes where Europe only figured in the foreign policy section), only relevant sections were transcribed for analysis although the documents were all read in full.

## APPENDIX B: DOCUMENTS SELECTED FOR IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

### LIST OF ANALYSED DOCUMENTS – FRONT NATIONAL (65)

Year	Document Name	Author	Type
1978	Programme 7e arrondissement	FN	Programme
1979	Plateforme de l'Union française pour l'Europe	FN	Programme
1981	Programme élections législatives	FN	Programme
1984	Les Français d'abord	Le Pen J.-M.	Programmatic book
1985	Pour la France: Le Pen Jean-Marie présente le programme du FN	FN	Programmatic book
1985	Immigration action ferme et résolue des élus FN au PE	FN	Article
1986	L'Europe, d'abord une volonté	Le Pen J.-M.	Article
1986	L'avenir de notre Europe	Le Pen J.-M.	Editorial
1987	Construire l'Europe de la Puissance	Mégret Bruno	Unclear
1987	Jeunesse Nation Europe	Lang Carl	Article
1988	Un nouveau pas vers l'Europe du tiers monde	Le Chevallier Jean Marie	Article
1988	Etre ou Disparaître: Discours Le Pen Europe	Le Pen J.-M.	Speech
1989	Passeport pour la victoire	Front National	Pamphlet
1989	L'illusion du primat de l'économie ou l'Europe à l'envers	Pichon Olivier	Article
1989	Pour Une Europe des Peuples	Le Pen J.-M.	Editorial
1989	Euromanifesto	FN	Programme
1989	Les principes fondateurs de notre Europe	Mégret Bruno	Article
1989	En avant pour les Européennes	Mégret Bruno	Article
1990	Schengen ils l'ont fait	Salagnac Catherine	Article
1991	Militer au Front	FN	Party guide

1991	Les échecs de l'Europe des douze	Le Pen J.-M.	Editorial
1992	L'engrenage de Maastricht	Salagnac Catherine	Article
1992	Notre Europe les patries contre Maastricht	Mégret Bruno	Article
1992	Le serment de Reims	Le Pen J.-M.	Editorial
1993	Sortons de cette Europe là	Le Pen J.-M.	Editorial
1993	300 mesures pour la France	FN	Programme
1994	Ma vérité sur l'Europe	Le Pen J.-M.	Interview
1994	Euromanifesto	FN	Programme
1995	Discours 1er Mai	FN	Speech
1995	Le contrat pour la France avec les Français	FN	Programmatic book
1997	17ème Fête des Bleu-Blanc-Rouge	Le Pen J.-M.	Speech
1997	Programme	FN	Programme
1998	Fête de Jeanne d'Arc du 1er Mai 1998	Le Pen J.-M.	Speech
1999	Poursuivre notre mission pour changer d'Europe	Le Pen J.-M.	Editorial
1999	Le Front National pour restaurer notre identité nationale face à l'Europe fédérale	NA	Dossier
2000	La Turquie et l'Union Européenne un mariage impossible	NA	Article
2000	Indépendance	Lang Carl	Article
2001	Entretien avec Le Pen Jean-Marie	NA	Interview
2002	L'Europe des collabos	Lang Carl	Article
2002	Pour un avenir français : le programme de gouvernement du Front National	FN/de Bouillon Godefroy	Programme
2003	Au Parlement européen le Front National: le parti qui défend les français d'abord	Lang Carl	Article
2003	Discours Le Pen Jean-Marie Conseil National du Front National	Le Pen J.-M.	Speech
2004	Aucun bien n'est plus précieux que l'indépendance	Le Pen J.-M.	Interview
2004	Quelle Europe/Pour défendre la France en Europe	Gollnisch Bruno, Lang Carl	Article
2004	Euromanifesto	FN	Programme

2005	Le discours du NON au référendum sur la Constitution européenne.	Le Pen J.-M.	Speech
2006	Des plombiers polonais	Gollnisch Bruno	Article
2007	Discours à Toulouse sur le thème de l'Europe	Le Pen J.-M.	Speech
2007	Programme de Gouvernement de Jean-Marie Le Pen	FN	Programme
2008	Gollnisch A propos de l'Union Soviétique européenne	Gollnisch Bruno	Speech
2009	Discours de Louis ALIOT lors de la Convention d'Arras	Aliot Louis	Speech
2009	Euromanifesto	FN	Programme
2010	L'esprit du 29 mai	Le Pen Marine	Speech
2011	Conseil National du FN - Le discours de clôture de Marine Le Pen	Le Pen Marine	Speech
2011	L'autre Europe	Aliot Louis	Editorial
2012	Notre projet: Programme Politique du Front national	FN	Programme
2012	Union européenne: vers le stade ultime de l'Union Soviétique Européenne ?	FN	Press release
2013	Appel de Marine Le Pen aux peuples d'Europe	Le Pen Marine	Press release
2014	Non à Bruxelles oui à l'Europe des nations	Langlois Marc	Article
2015	M. Schulz s'en prend à la Pologne / l'UE de plus en plus dictatoriale	Bay Nicolas	Press release
2016	Sortir de l'Union européenne, une nécessité politique	Club Idées Nation	Blog post
2016	Referendum aux Pays-Bas - lorsque les peuples parlent, l'Union européenne chancelle	Bay Nicolas	Press release
2016	Discours Fréjus	Le Pen Marine	Speech
2017	144 Engagements Présidentiels	FN	Programme
2017	Discours Le Pen Marine Journée des élus	Le Pen Marine	Speech

## MOVIMENTO SOCIALE ITALIANO (26)<sup>31</sup>

Year	Document Name	Author	Type
1978	Intervista sull'Eurodestra	Almirante Giorgio	Interview book
1978	Programma Eurodestra	MSI	Programme
1979	Programma Nazionale 1979	MSI	Programme
1979	XII Congresso Napoli 5-7 ottobre 1979	MSI	Congress motions (2): <sup>32</sup> Continuare per rinnovare (Almirante, Romualdi), Linea Futura (Rauti)
1979	Intervista sull'Europa	Romualdi Pino	Interview book
1979	Programme Europee 1979	MSI	Programme
1980	Il MSI dalla A alla zeta	MSI	Pamphlet
1981	Atlantismo non servile	Romualdi Pino	Article
1981	Le nostre radici	Romualdi Pino	Article
1982	XIII Congresso - Roma, 18-21 febbraio 1982	MSI	Congress motions (3): Nuova Repubblica (Almirante), Spazio Nuovo '82 (Rauti), Destra '80 (Romualdi)
1983	Programma	MSI	Programme
1984	XIV Congresso - Roma 29 novembre - 2 dicembre 1984	MSI	Congress motion (1)
1985	L'Europa dei prefissi	Mantovani Cesare	Article
1985	Ma la scelta è politica	Mantovani Cesare	Article
1986	La Turchia e la Comunità Europea	Mollicone Nazareno	Article

<sup>31</sup> Congress documents are counted as a single document, however, the number of Congress motions varies between the different congresses. The number and title of motions is specified in parenthesis under the section 'Type'

<sup>32</sup> For further information on the number of votes received by each motion, see Tarchi 1997: 62.



1986	Voglia d'Europa	Romualdi Pino	Article
1987	Programma Politica Estera	MSI	Programme
1987	XV Congresso - Sorrento, 11-14 dicembre 1987	MSI	Congress motions (6): Andare Oltre (Rauti), Destra in movimento (Fini), Impegno Unitario (Servillo), Proposta Italia (Mennitti), Destra Italiana (Romualdi), Nuove Prospettive (Tremaglia)
1988	Alla logica della moneta opporremo storia e cultura	MSI	Article
1989	L'Europa riscopre le radici	Urso Adolfo	Article
1990	XVI Congresso - Rimini, 11-14 gennaio 1990	MSI	Congress motions (6): Destra in movimento (Fini), Andare Oltre (Rauti), Impegno Unitario (Servillo), Proposta Italia (Mennitti), Nuove Prospettive (Tremaglia), Destra Italiana (Lo Porto)
1991	Tante incognite nel futuro dell'Europa	Petronio Franco	Article
1992	Programma nazionale 1992	MSI	Programme
1993	La crisi politica travolge Maastricht	Gasparri Maurizio	Article
1993	Nuova Europa e chi se ne è accorto	Toppi Paolo	Article
1994	XVII Congresso - Roma, 28-30 gennaio 1994	MSI	Congress motions (1)

## ALLEANZA NAZIONALE (21)

Year	Document Name	Author	Type
1994	Alleanza Nazionale Programma Politiche	AN	Programme
1994	Alleanza Nazionale Programmae Europee	AN	Euromanifesto
1995	Congresso Fiuggi, 25-27 Gennaio 1995	AN	Congress motion
1996	Destra vuol dire Europa	Tremaglia, Mirko	Article
1997	In Europa ci andremo da turisti	Malgieri, Gennaro	Article
1997	Euroconservatori Crescono	Respinti, Marco	Article
1998	Tesi conferenza programmatica di Verona	AN	Programmatic conference
1999	Manifesto elezioni europee	AN	Euromanifesto
2000	Valori ed idee senza compromessi – Manifesto dei valori	AN	Manifesto
2000	Rapporti piu' chiari con l'UE	Alemanno, Gianni	Article
2001	Tesi Seconda conferenza programmatica	AN	Programmatic conference
2002	Fini: vogliamo un'Europa dei popoli	Parlato, Lucilla	Interview
2002	E sarà patria anche la casa Europea	Chiggio, Rolando	Article
2002	Tesi II congresso: Vince la patria, nasce l'Europa	AN	Congress motion
2003	La via maestra per la nuova Europa	Armani, Pietro	Article
2004	Manifesto elezioni europee	AN	Euromanifesto
2005	Se il sogno Europeo diventa incubo	Selva, Gustavo	Article
2006	L'Europa straordinaria armonia fra diversità	Perdizzi, Riccardo	Article
2007	Una conferma europea per le tesi di AN	Alemanno, Gianni	Article
2008	Quest'Europa poco amata dagli europei	Carrino, Agostino	Article
2009	Mozione III Congresso	AN	Congress motion

## APPENDIX C: SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

An Excel file containing the full list of documents forming the corpus was made available to examiners. A shared folder containing scanned copies of the documents selected for in-depth analysis was also provided to them.

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